

LET'S SPLIT
WHY ELTON JOHN HAS
LEFT HIS PARTNER

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THE INDEPENDENT

Wednesday 13 May 1998 45p (IR 50p) No 3,609

Newspaper of the Year for photographs

This sad pile of corpses may spell the end for Suharto

IT IS only hours since they died, but already the six young men in the mortuary of the Sumber Waras Hospital have shed the look of the living. Hendriawan, the economics student, has a necklace of dried blood around his neck.

Heri Heryanto, of the engineering faculty, has half-open eyes and pallid, glassy skin. A weeping young woman touches his cheek and springs back with a cry at how cold he is. They lie side by side in a strip-lit room where the mosquitoes buzz, four more reasons – if more were needed – for believing this is the beginning of the end of President Suharto.

A year ago the Indonesian leader was one of the most respected leaders in Asia, a man who unified the world's fourth-largest nation and oversaw three decades of steady growth. Since last summer the Asian economic crisis has destroyed President Suharto's economic achievements and this year's student protests, culminating in last night's bloodshed, have completely undermined his claims to legitimacy. Yesterday afternoon, 5,000 students from Trisakti University, Jakarta, were demonstrating – noisily but peacefully – for his overthrow. Such protests have become commonplace in Indonesia this year, and this one began as they all do – with speeches and slogans and songs. It ended with a charge by police who beat up those they could catch, and chased others inside their campus where they were picked off with rubber and live bullets. Apart from the six confirmed dead, more than 60 people were injured in an incident which will escalate drastically the nationwide campaign of protest against President Suharto.

The violence of the police response was especially incomprehensible given the good-naturedness of the demonstration. It began in the morning in the campus of the private university, base for 29,000 of Jakarta's wealthiest and most fashionable students. It was one of the biggest demonstrations in the capital in two years and around noon it moved out of the campus and into the street. The aim was to march to the office

of the mayor of Jakarta and present a petition. But a line of police blocked the path. Reinforcements soon arrived, including British-made Tactica armoured cars, and the traffic was blocked along a six-lane road. But the atmosphere was calm and light-hearted – students passed roses to the troops and pushed them into their gun barrels. At 1.30pm there was an intense shower of tropical rain, and the crowd thinned out. "The chief of police praised them for conducting such a peaceful demon-

stration," said Professor Adi Andjyo, dean of the university law faculty, after visiting the mortuary last night. "They didn't throw stones. There was no provocation. It is very cruel and it makes me so angry."

By the late afternoon, the police and remaining students were backing away from one another. Then, just as everyone appeared about to pack up and go home, a plain clothes policeman got into a scuffle with a group of students. The police ran forward, shouldering their rifles and

brandishing their clubs. They charged the crowd, kicking and beating those they could catch, firing first blanks, then small-calibre rubber-coated rounds.

The students fled back on to their campus and it is here that the worst atrocities appear to have taken place, as students were bunted down by pursuing police and surpers on a nearby overpass. "Some were shot in the head, some in the back, some in the chest," said Professor Andjyo. "I saw blood in the grounds of the campus. This proves that they were shooting inside." Many students were unaccounted for last night.

Anger as Europe votes to 'sell-off' genes

By Katherine Butler and Charles Arthur

THE European Parliament yesterday approved new legislation which lets biotechnology companies claim exclusive rights to the commercial use of genes – including human ones.

Opponents of the new measure say that it will effectively allow companies to "patent life", and warn that it will lead to an explosion in healthcare costs.

They claim private companies which have patented tests for naturally-occurring gene sequences – such as genes linked with breast cancer – could charge huge royalties from medical researchers or companies making diagnostic kits.

Plant and animal breeders may also have to pay royalties to the patent owners, as the directive covers all life forms that include genetic modifications.

But in last-minute concessions won from ministers, the MEPs ensured that the Europe-wide legislation outlaws cloning and patenting of human embryos, therapies that would transmit genetic changes to a person's descendants, and prevents patenting where modification of genetic make-up would cause suffering without any "substantial" benefit to man or animal, such as an animal genetically engineered to develop cancer.

Drug companies insisted that patent protection for their work is essential to allow them to recoup research and development costs – which can run into tens of millions of pounds – even for unsuccessful drugs –

and that the new Directive On The Patenting Of Biotechnological Inventions will speed up the search for cures for cancer and genetic diseases such as cystic fibrosis and muscular dystrophy by creating uniformity in patent rules across Europe.

"After 10 years of debate Europe can look forward to increased investment and renewed hope for patients," said a spokesman for the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations.

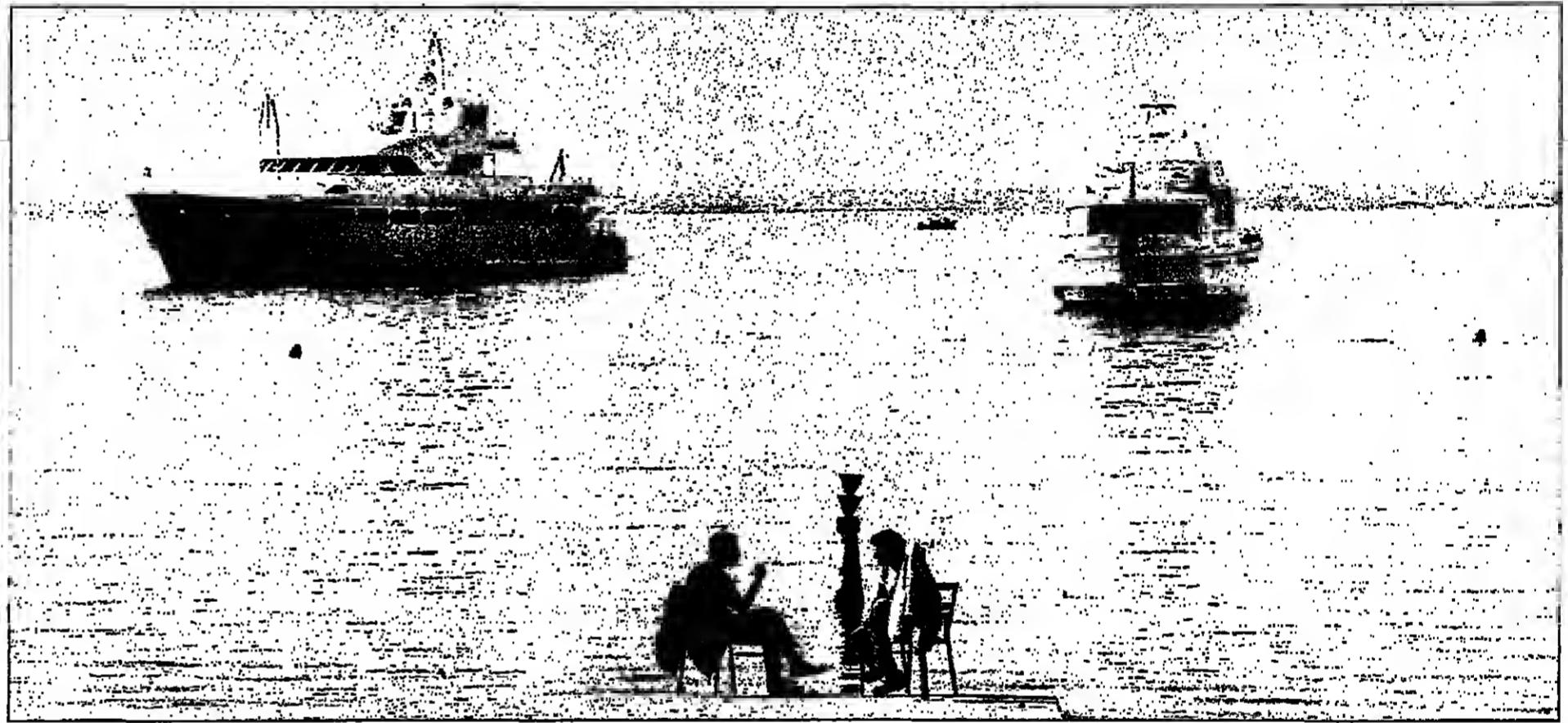
"It sends a strong signal that encourages Europe's pharmaceutical industry to invest even more in biotechnology."

But others are less optimistic. Patricia McKenna, a Green MEP, said: "In years to come, when a multinational will own our genes and when genetic resources are being plundered from the Third World we will look back on this disastrous day and apologise to our children and grandchildren."

Hiltrud Breyer, a German ecologist parliamentarian, commented: "The Euro Parliament has made an irresponsible decision, it has given carte blanche to the commercialisation of the human body."

The key to the argument is whether companies can now simply patent a gene – that is, a unique sequence of DNA "base pairs" with a named function. That has been the case in the United States since the 1980s. But in Europe, the rules varied widely. An earlier form of the Directive was thrown out by the Parliament in 1995.

Denial of rights, page 7
Leading article, page 18



Film-industry insiders getting down to business at an early-morning meeting in Cannes yesterday on the eve of the 51st festival Grit and glitz, page 3

Photograph: Brian Harris

Cook: My officials are in the clear

By Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

ROBIN Cook yesterday pre-empted part of the Customs and Excise investigation into the Sierra Leone arms affair by clearing his officials of any part in a plot to breach the UN arms embargo.

Showing all the fire for which he made his name in the House, the Foreign Secretary declared the innocence of Foreign Office staff, accused the Sandline mercenary group of lying in a bid to clear its name, and repudiated allegations that he was a shyster who did not read his Red Box papers.

At the end of an hour's cross-examination, he told Michael Howard, the

opposition spokesman, that he felt sorry for him: "Every radio broadcast today has promised that there's going to be an hour on the rack for me here. I have to say it has been quite a pleasant interlude."

A day of Government fightback began with the Prime Minister's official spokesman disclosing that Tejan Kabbah, the president of Sierra Leone, had sent Tony Blair an unsolicited testimonial, insisting he had received no military backing from British Government sources in restoring democracy to his country.

He also joined the Whitehall campaign against Sandline, saying the company's "role in the removal of the illegal regime and the return of my government has been exaggerated. I assure

you most emphatically that at no time did my government utilise mercenaries provided by Sandline. In fact, arrangements of third parties, of which I was aware, enabled Sandline to make a single delivery of light weapons for use by our Civil Defence Units only after the removal of the illegal regime and the liberation of Freetown..."

Later, replying to an emergency Commons question from Mr Howard, who said the entire affair was fast degenerating into a "shambles", with the Foreign Office "wholly out of ministerial control", Mr Cook said he was constrained by the Customs investigation.

But he gave notice that he would no longer stand by while wild allegations were

laid against defenceless officials. "I will say to the House that in all the papers on this affair, I have found no evidence that officials in the Africa Department were involved in any kind of conspiracy with Sandline, or gave any prior approval to a breach of the arms embargo."

"The investigation which I have ordered will establish the truth. But, in the meantime, I have more faith in my officials than I have in Sandline."

Mr Cook said the first document he received about any breach of the arms embargo or a shipment of arms was on 28 April, when he saw the letter from Sandline's lawyers.

Who is Tony Buckingham? page 3
FO rebuked, page 10

In brief

Roddick quits

ANITA RODDICK, who opened the first branch of the Body Shop 22 years ago, blazed the trail for ethical entrepreneurs, is stepping down as chief executive. Page 5

Drug denial

REDUCING punishments for using cannabis in prison was not a signal that the Government condoned the use of soft drugs, George Howarth, the drugs minister, said yesterday. Page 8

Profit lesson

A US firm which runs schools for profit is discussing taking over failing schools with the Government. Edison Project leaders also held exploratory talks with Education Department officials about how a profit-making company might run schools which will aim to raise standards in poor areas. Page 11

Hoddle tells Gazza he can smoke through the World Cup

By Glenn Moore
Football Correspondent

PAUL GASCOIGNE, the footballer whose health and fitness have been a constant source of concern for England managers, was last night given permission to smoke his way through this summer's World Cup.

Until yesterday, Gascoigne's habit, now believed to be up to 20-a-day, had not attracted the attention of those other vices which earned him notoriety in

the past such as wife-beating and excessive drinking.

Yesterday, however, Glenn Hoddle, the England coach, confirmed Gascoigne's nicotine habit. He said it was a private matter and that making Gascoigne give up for the tournament might have an adverse effect.

The response brought an angry reaction from anti-smoking groups. Smoking may help Gascoigne's battle to keep his weight down but few habits

could be as harmful to his long-term fitness.

Gascoigne has long been indulged as a special talent but Hoddle suggested he may be losing patience when he said this week: "He is not out of the woods yet."

Clive Bates, the group director of the anti-smoking organisation Ash, criticised Gascoigne. "Gascoigne has basically given the green light to kids who'll say 'If Gazza smokes, it's all right for me.'"

Gascoigne is following a long tradition of outstanding footballers who smoked, most of them in the days before the extent of its dangers was known. Of England's 1966 World Cup winners, Bobby Moore, Jack and Bobby Charlton and Nobbs Stiles all liked a puff, while Ray Wilson smoked a pipe.

Smokers' XI (Brazil, Moore

England, Charlton England, Wilson England, R Charlton England, Socrates Brazil, Ardiles Argentina, Gerson Brazil, Cruyff Holland, Law Scotland, Giola France).

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Betty Boothroyd, Speaker of the House of Commons, and Claire Ward, the youngest female MP, at Westminster yesterday celebrating a £4.2m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund towards a new building to house Britain's first national library for women

Detectives in nanny inquiry fly to Australia

By Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

SCOTLAND YARD detectives are travelling to Australia to investigate the work record of Louise Sullivan, the nanny facing possible murder charges after a baby died in her care.

Police want to examine 18 "lines of inquiry" in connection with the 26-year-old Australian's previous childcare experience and claims that some of her qualification are bogus.

Miss Sullivan is charged with causing grievous bodily harm to six-month-old Caroline Jongen on 17 April. The baby allegedly suffered brain injuries while in the care of the nanny in London. A pathologist believes she

may have been shaken in death, although further tests are being carried out after earlier results were inconclusive. Miss Sullivan denies the charge.

Three senior detectives from the Metropolitan Police's north-west area Major Investigations Team are flying to Sydney tomorrow to investigate reports from Australia about Miss Sullivan's previous work experience as a nanny. It is understood they plan to interview past employers and visit her school and college to examine her qualifications.

They want to carry out an eight day investigation in Sydney and its suburb of Manly. A police spokesman said: "Some interviews have already been arranged and we are liaising closely with the Australian police and authorities."

Miss Sullivan, who as part of her bail conditions has had to surrender her passport and stay in London, is due to appear in court on 8 June, when police have indicated that manslaughter

or possibly murder charges could be brought against her.

The nanny has also had to provide a £2,500 surety and promise not to contact Caroline's parents.

Caroline was pronounced dead at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children at 5pm on 22 April. She had been in a coma for five days after she was taken to hospital from the home of Dutch-born Marcel Jongen, 41, and his French wife Muriel, 36, in Cricklewood, north-west London. At the opening of an inquest into the baby's death, Dr Freddie Patel, a pathologist, said that the injuries suggested "shaken baby syndrome", but added that a post mortem examination could not be conclusive until further tests had been completed. The inquest was adjourned to a later date.

Miss Sullivan's solicitor, Karen Todner, said yesterday her client had carried out a properly qualified course in Australia.

Children in hospital after E.coli outbreak

SIX children have been struck down with the *E.coli* O157 bacteria, health officials said yesterday. The youngsters, aged between two and nine, are understood to be friends from the Purbeck area of Dorset. They were all admitted to hospital over the weekend after suffering stomach upsets. Five are still in hospital, with one in a serious condition. The sixth child is being treated at home after being discharged from hospital.

Health officials have launched an investigation to trace the source of the outbreak. A spokeswoman for Dorset Health Authority said: "It looks like it is linked to a group of friends and the wider community is not at risk. Some of the children go to the same school, but we are not looking at the school as a source of the outbreak."

Dounreay stays closed

DOUNREAY, on the north coast of Scotland, has been ordered not to recommence nuclear processing in the wake of last week's power failure which raised fears of contamination.

The Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, an arm of the Health and Safety Executive, confirmed it had suspended the operation. Management will not be allowed to restart processing until the electrical supply systems have been checked and the plant is safe. A Dounreay spokeswoman said the plant had arranged for an independent inspection of its electrical safety systems, which would take four weeks.

Mary Bell injunction granted

AN INJUNCTION was granted yesterday banning journalists, press photographers and photographers from going within half a mile of the home or school of Mary Bell's daughter and from filming or taking photographs of the child or her carers. Bell has been at the centre of press attention since it was revealed last month that she was paid for helping in the preparation of Gitta Sereny's book, *Cries Unheard*, about the two murders she committed in 1968 when aged 11.

Just the ticket for wardens

TRAFFIC wardens are to be given free passes to travel on buses and pounce on illegally-parked motorists. In a move thought to be the first of its kind, London Transport will issue the passes to wardens in more than half of all London boroughs. It is hoped the measure will keep buses moving freely on the capital's priority lanes, which are often blocked by parked vehicles.

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7/NEWS

THE INDEPENDENT
WEDNESDAY 13 MAY 1998

'Are Europe's politicians condemning women like me to death?'



Wendy Watson: 'If I had not had the mastectomy I would probably not be here'

Photograph: Raymonds

FIVE years ago this week Wendy Watson had both her breasts removed in a preventative mastectomy. At the time she was perfectly healthy with no signs of cancer, but nine members of her family had suffered with the disease, and six of them had died young, most of them under 50.

"I knew I had the gene for breast cancer, BRCA1, and that it was only a matter of time, so why wait until the cancer arrived? Better to have it right away without the need for chemotherapy," she said.

It was the first preventative mastectomy of its kind in the UK, and five years on Mrs Watson, now 43 – the same age at which her mother died – has never felt better and there is no sign of the disease.

She is happy with her own health, but angry that in future women may be denied tests for the gene which would be one of the many covered by yesterday's European Parliament decision to patent genetic testing, which will allow companies to claim fees and royalties for the use of tests which they have developed.

Myriad Genetics, of Salt Lake City in the United States, which has already applied to patent the BRCA1 gene in Europe, at present charges about \$2,400 (£1,472) for the test in the US.

"I have the gene and there is no doubt

Gene-patenting could deny the terminally ill the right to a cure.

Roger Dobson reports

that if I had not had the mastectomy I would probably not be here today. My mum died at 43, my cousin at 38, and others at similar ages," said Mrs Watson who led a campaign against patenting of genetic tests and who a year ago launched the Hereditary Breast Cancer helpline.

She became aware of a likely genetic link when she was 16 and her mother died. Her grandmother had also had breast cancer twice, and had died of ovarian cancer, a malignancy in which the BRCA1 gene is also implicated. When she moved to the Peak District eight years ago, she found more family members with the disease.

"I didn't know much about genes at the time, but it was blindingly obvious to me that it was hereditary. I went to doctors to see what courses of action were open to me and they all talked about catching it early. It occurred to me that the only sure way was to rid of the at-risk tissue before

the cancer came. I think everyone at the time thought I was being too drastic, even irrational, but I knew it wasn't drastic. My only objective was to stay alive and to me dying was the drastic hit, not what I was going to have done," Mrs Watson said.

"Everyone should have the right to have a genetic test and take whatever action is necessary to save their lives. By allowing companies to patent things like this and charge for them, we will in effect be denying some people the right to a cure."

Although no figures are available, it is estimated that at least 100 women a year in Britain now opt to have a preventative mastectomy because of extensive family history or as a result of positive genetic testing.

Britain's leading geneticists have warned the Government that gene-patenting will

cost the NHS millions of pounds in royalties, mostly to American biotech companies.

But Bill Hockett, director of corporate affairs for Myriad Genetics, said: "The gene would probably not have been discovered but for the potential of patenting. Without the protection that the patent affords, a company could not invest hundreds of millions of dollars in getting it to the market place."

■ Hereditary Breast Cancer helpline: 01629 813000.

Call for reform of 'shambolic' asylum system

By Ian Burrell
Home Affairs Correspondent

A JUMBO JET full of failed asylum-seekers will be deported every day from Britain unless radical steps are taken to strengthen the asylum system, the immigration minister said yesterday.

Mike O'Brien told the Home Affairs Select Committee that up to 110,000 asylum-seekers "would be due in some way for removal from the United Kingdom" by 2002 if numbers of applicants continued to rise and the present slow system of processing claims and removals was not radically reformed. "That's a 747 [aircraft] a day, which is clearly a very big problem."

He said the system was in such a "shambles" that 17,000 asylum-seekers had already "gone to ground" and were out of contact with immigration department officials.

But Mr O'Brien was forced to deny that his officials pursued a "culture of rejection" as he was questioned by Marsha Singh, the Labour MP for Bradford West. Mr Singh said two members of his family had been refused permission to come to Britain for a family wedding despite his assurance as an MP that they would return.

Mr O'Brien said officers deciding such applications often required "the wisdom of

Solomon, and some of them are not Solomon. Some of them with the best will in the world will get things wrong."

Mr O'Brien refused to back down when told that people had been refused entry because officials did not believe their claims to belong to families with rights to live here. Mr Singh said DNA tests had subsequently shown that many of those refused had been telling the truth.

Earlier Mr O'Brien was at pains to stress that he did not wish to pursue an asylum policy that could be perceived as racist. He said that account should be taken of the benefits which immigrants brought to Britain, and genuine refugees should receive a favourable hearing.

The minister said the Government was seeking to improve the asylum system by reducing the two-stage appeal process to a single stage. Britain will also lobby other EU states later this month for reform of the Dublin Convention, which requires refugees to seek asylum in the first state in which they arrive, but is being widely flouted.

Mr O'Brien told MPs that there were 19,500 asylum claimants whose appeals have been exhausted and are waiting to be sent home. Another 23,000 were awaiting decisions on their appeals, while 51,000 were awaiting an initial ruling.

Poor management blamed for Ashworth failures

By Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

A "LITANY of murder, attempted murder, pornography and paedophile activity" in Ashworth special hospital could have been avoided, an inquiry heard yesterday.

Poor leadership and management lay behind many of the problems at the hospital which houses some of Britain's most dangerous psychiatric patients, said David Preece, of the Prison Officers' Association.

"The majority of it could have been prevented through greater consultation and involvement of the staff – the staff that do the job," he claimed.

Mr Preece, POA branch chairman since 1993, was giving evidence at the public inquiry into the running of the Personality Disorder Unit at Ashworth. The inquiry was ordered in January 1997 by former secretary of state for health, Stephen Dorrell, after allegations of paedophilia, pornography and drug use on the unit.

Mr Preece said that Ashworth had not improved since the previous Blom-Cooper inquiry. "There have been major improvements, but there are still major problems," he said.

Pornography, and drug and alcohol misuse were not con-

fined to the wards of the PDU. Similar allegations had been made among the mental health patients, he said.

The inquiry was told earlier that police investigated concerns over patients establishing contact with a paedophile ring operating outside the hospital.

Michael Bateson, a principal social worker at Ashworth since July 1995, spoke of fears that alleged paedophile activity "might be widening".

Mr Bateson said staff were aware that a former patient – the father of the girl, known as Child A, at the centre of the paedophilia allegations – was still in contact with former patients.

Mr Bateson said he first learned of the allegations arising from Child A's visits to paedophiles on the PDU's Lawrence Ward in October 1996. Later he was ordered to oversee an investigation into her contact with the patients by the then chief executive Janice Miles. Mr Bateson said he saw no benefit for Child A in visiting the PDU.

Mr Bateson told how he contacted a social services department for further information on the child and said the authorities allowed the girl to continue living with her father, despite being aware of details of his previous convictions, including one for attempted rape.

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Prisoners talk their way out of drug problems

By Ian Burrell
Home Affairs Correspondent

MURDERERS, robbers and drug-dealers. They might not seem the most obvious counsellors for those wanting to open their hearts about the problems of their formative years.

Yet some of the most hardened, drug-dependent inmates

in HMP Coldingley have found that by confiding their darkest secrets in each other they have been able to see their way to a brighter future.

For those acculturated to an environment where any signals of weakness are seized upon and ruthlessly exploited, the idea of group therapy is a culture shock which, in their words, "takes a lot of bottle".

Trevor, who is in the eighth year of a life sentence for a drug-related murder, said: "It has helped me get in touch with who I am; my feelings, my emotions and why I turned to drugs in the first place.

"I've discovered so much about myself personally." His enthusiasm for the programme - run by the Rehabilitation for Addicted Prisoners Trust (RAPt) - is all the greater for having approached it with deep

cynicism. He had already tried other drug-rehabilitation courses in other jails and failed them. "It was learning from textbooks and being talked to by people who didn't know how I was feeling," he explained.

"Here even the counsellors have had experiences. It helps to know that I am talking to fellow addicts."

Almost all RAPt staff have experienced drug problems and

prisoners who have passed through the programme often stay on as "peer supporters" to help fellow inmates. Partly thanks to the RAPt scheme, Coldingley prison has reduced the number of inmates testing positive for drugs from 40 per cent to 15 per cent in the space of a year. The number testing positive for opiates has fallen from 3.8 per cent to 2.6 per cent in the same period.

It is a signal of hope after widely expressed fears that drug use had become so rife in Britain's jails that even prisoners who began their sentences without an addiction would have one by the time they were released. Yesterday the Government announced the new Prison Service Drugs Strategy with the promise that treatment programmes would be greatly expanded.

Richard Tilt, director-general of the Prison Service, conceded that he was dependent on the Government's comprehensive spending review, which will be completed later this summer, for the money to allow the programmes to be set up.

Adam Sampson, chief executive of RAPt, said at least £10m a year on top of the current annual spend of £7m was needed to set up the necessary new schemes.

He said: "Unless government supports these fine words with some hard cash, their good intentions will be wasted."

At the launch of the strategy George Howarth, the drugs minister, said that a decision to reduce punishments for the use of cannabis in prison was not a signal that the Government condoned the use of soft drugs.

He said the measure, which was revealed in *The Independent* last week, had been taken to help reduce tension within the jail. In the time that positive drug tests have plummeted, the number of disciplinary incidents in the prison has fallen by 60 per cent.

Neal and Dean, who are "peer supporters", prisoners who have passed the programme and often stay to help fellow inmates. Photograph: Tom Pilson



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DAILY POEM

Roundhouse

By John Kinsella

Built in 1830/31 on the headland on the south side of the Swan River mouth, the Roundhouse was Western Australia's first gaol.

Windscale on a pitted cenoaph collects
In the seascale, the script, the brocade
Of a foaming, spreading hand - shoalwaters

Where the polished caprock tightens the little
Space - though the sky expands amongst
The mental rigging, adhering itself to a calenture -

Deep green, the sooty terns rock on the lip
And then flip back into oblivion. Windscale
In its sharp climb should incite an angrier sea...

The barebone, the spilt's jawjet, the anchorage
Of rock and shore, aspirations for games
On the sky's field of play - cenoaph - mudinity...

This week's poems celebrate the work of John Kinsella, who was born in Perth, Western Australia, in 1963, and mark the simultaneous publication of his *Poems 1980-1994* (Bloodaxe, £9.95) and his new volume, *The Hunt* (Bloodaxe, £7.95). This poem first appeared in *Full Fathom Five* (1993).

It's good to listen.

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مدى من الأصل

Minister
in fight
for his
career

US firm in line to run schools for profit

By Judith Judd
Education Editor

AN AMERICAN company which runs schools for profit is holding discussions with the Government about taking over failing schools in Britain.

Leaders of the Edison Project have also held exploratory talks with officials at the Department for Education about how a profit-making company might run schools in education action zones which will aim to raise standards in poor areas.

David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education, has said that no company will be able to run an action zone for profit but he hopes businesses will be involved.

Bennie C Schmidt, Edison's chairman and a former Yale president, in London last night to deliver a lecture at the Institute of Economic Affairs, described the attitude of officials to the idea as "on the whole, pragmatic".

He said: "The Government has asked us about the sort of profits we would want to make. I have been clear that we have no problem with the idea that we should not make excessive and unreasonable profit."

"We would be very happy to take part in a system where there were ceilings and caps on levels of profitability but we can't be locked into an inflexible budget. They have not said that making a profit would rule us out."

He pointed out that his company had provided much-needed investment in the 25

schools which it runs in eight American states, on contract to school districts, the equivalent of local education authorities.

Standards were rising and the project expected a commercial return by using public money more efficiently, he added. Fifteen more schools will be set up from the autumn.

Edison has had half a dozen meetings with government officials and more are scheduled. It has expressed interest in two bids for action zones from Tameside and Surrey.

Mr Schmidt said the Government had also raised the prospect of Edison taking over failing schools. "Officials have suggested this might well be legal, possibly working with local education authorities."

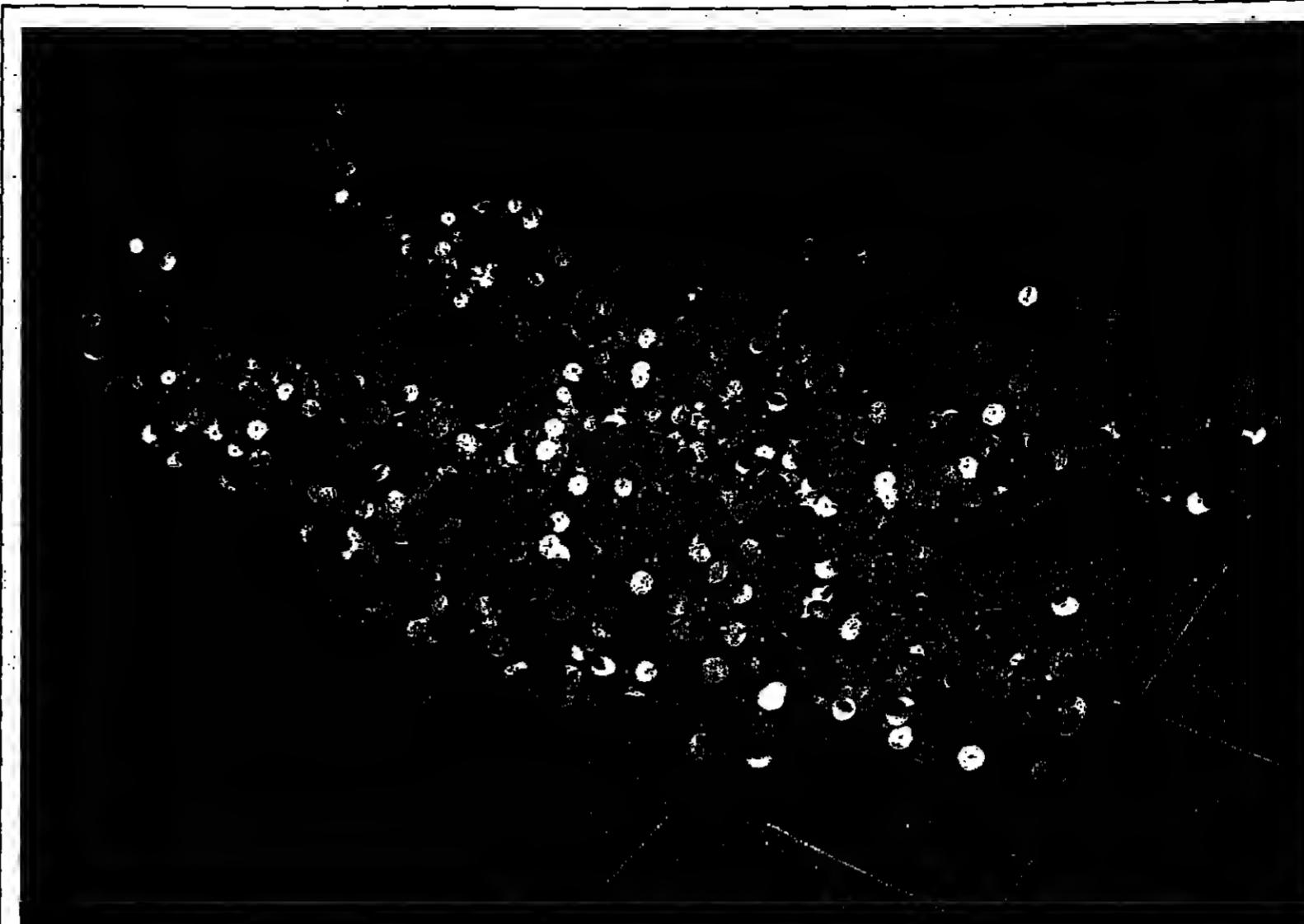
They wanted to be sure, he added, that the interests of children would not be sacrificed.

Doug McAvoy, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said: "I hope that officials at the Department for Education have kept their ministers informed. We have a clear commitment from the Secretary of State that organisations will not be allowed to run schools for profit in this country."

"If taxpayers' cash has been set aside for the education of children it should not be made available for commercial profit."

A Department for Education and Employment spokesman said: "No commitments have been made to any organisation.

But we are always interested in new ideas from public and private sector organisations."



Cornelia Parker's *Matter & What It Means*, part of a new exhibition of the sculptor's work at the Serpentine Gallery in London. Photograph: Rui Xavier

Summit bid salvaged from the storm



Base Camp

ALL SMILES at Base Camp this afternoon. Nima Dorjee and Pemba Tsering returned from the mountain after a night huddled in a collapsed tent with all their fingers intact and a more optimistic prognosis of our team's chances of still mounting a summit bid.

They spent most of the day gathering smashed tents and other gear, scattered over hundreds of metres of broken rock and glacier in the Western Cwm when 100mph winds tore Camp 2 apart early on Monday. All our high-altitude clothing was in the small tents hit by the storm.

Without those down jackets, salopettes and heavy-duty gloves we would be unable to withstand the bitter sub-zero temperatures higher up Everest. We still do not know the full

picture. But if, as it sounds from Nima and Pemba, nearly all our Himalayan Kingdoms Expeditions tents are still there, though broken, most of the gear should still be inside them. Unfortunately they were unable to find one of the tents used by two Sherpas and their gear and participation is vital to our effort. A summit bid will probably depend on how much equipment we can muster between us.

Nima and Pemba told their tale with typical Sherpa insouciance. Both are experienced climbing Sherpas, spending part of each year expeditioning and the rest with their families.

Nima, 32, short and with his face nearly always split by a grin or laughter comes from the Arun valley area away to the east. Pemba, 42, is from Khami Khola to the south of the Khumbu.

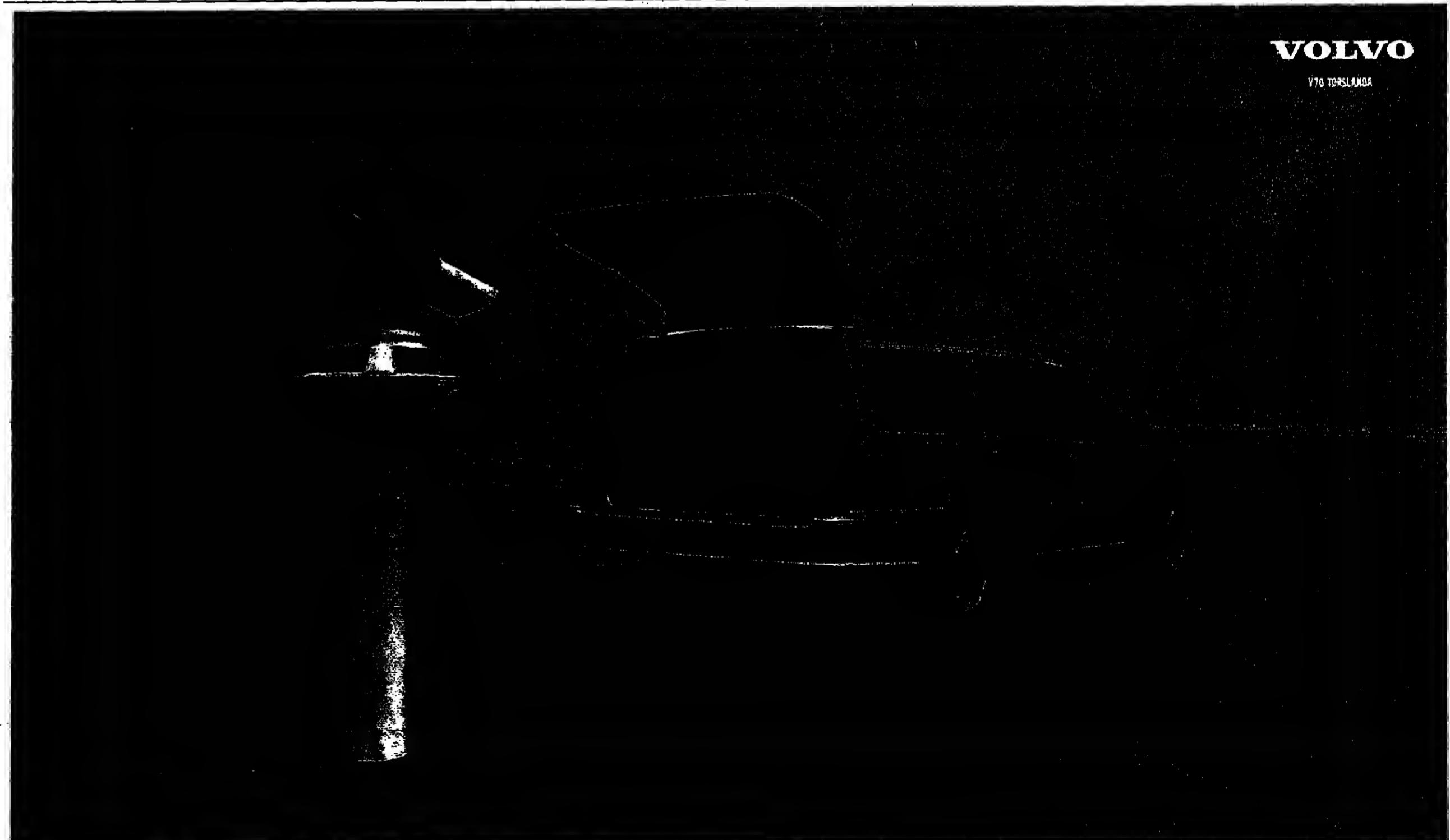
Their hands had frozen as they struggled in the storm, disentangling broken tent poles and

spending the night there. They would allow some of us to go up to Camp 2 and try and restore some order. All being well, four of us, including myself, will head up tomorrow and spend the night there.

Beyond that, it looks like another sojourn at Base Camp hoping for that elusive weather window. It is worth bearing in mind that the first ascensionists, Hillary and Tenzing, did not reach the top until 29 May.

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The day the dream of 1968 died

Thirty years ago students and workers united on the streets of France. John Lichfield assesses their legacy

THIRTY years ago today, France stood on the brink of revolution: or so it seemed.

A student rebellion had been raging for 10 days, without disturbing the peace of the greater part of France. On 13 May 1968, the workers – the word was still current three decades ago – came on to the streets.

The two largest trade union federations called a one-day general strike; there was an impressively large students-and-workers march in Paris. A stream of strikes and sit-ins followed, starting in the great Renault factory on an island in the Seine at Boulogne Billancourt (now an abandoned shell), followed by stoppages by railwaymen, miners, steel-workers... It appeared to some commentators, even to the CIA, that true revolution had come.

The participation of "real workers" is one of the factors which distinguishes the Paris spring of 1968 from the other

youth-led disturbances of the late 1960s. Revolutionaries in Britain and elsewhere were green with envy. The idea that Ford workers in Dagenham might strike in sympathy with British student protesters was ludicrous.

Three decades later, such a prospect is equally unthinkable in France. The May revolution seemed, briefly, like the apotheosis of the great Left Bank dream of intellectual-and-worker solidarity. In truth, the day the workers joined in was the beginning of the end. The unions had a series of specific demands which could be settled and were (a 10 per cent pay increase; extended union rights). After that, the whole movement rapidly deflated. The French intellectuals and the mass of French workers rarely fought on the same side again (though both voted for François Mitterrand in 1981).

The French working class, pocketing the gains they won in ill-



May 1968, moved into the bourgeois, consumerist society which the student rebellion had, theoretically, wanted to dismantle. The "moral" and intellectual Left lost patience with a working class which failed to live up to its allotted, revolutionary role.

The social unrest which accompanied the collapse of French heavy industry in the 1970s and 1980s left the intellectuals cold. Instead, the moral Left found surrogate proletariats elsewhere: in the Third

World and, most recently, in legal immigrants. The sanctification of the "sans-papiers" – illegal migrants – in the last 18 months is the most obvious symbol of the present gulf of understanding between ordinary people and the French artistic and intellectual élite (many of them former *soixante-huitards*, children of 68).

There were large demonstrations in Paris and other cities last year, led by cinema directors, writers and actors against relatively modest moves to control illegal immigrants. Such a policy, continued with only minor ad-

justments by the present Socialist-led government, is hugely popular with the working classes and lower middle classes – and with legal immigrants.

In truth, the students and workers had similarly differing ambitions 30 years ago. The May '68 rebellion was two rebellions which rarely met. Both were powered by intense irritation with the paternalistic, hierarchical – but successful – France which had recovered from the Second World War.

However, the student rebellion was always more

cultural and spiritual, than truly political or economic. It began with the frustration, literally, of male French students, locked out of women's halls of residence at Nanterre University.

The best-remembered student slogans of the day were hedonistic, anarchistic, sexually horny, utopian. "Be realistic, demand the impossible"; "Your desires are true reality"; "Live, without boredom"; "It is forbidden to forbid"; "The more I make revolution, the more I want to make love".

There were also idealists and revolutionaries among the workers, especially at the Renault factory, which refused at first to obey its leaders' recommendation to return to work. But, on union orders, most factories refused to let the

students in. In French society have proved as simplistic as student leaders' hopes of cultural revolution. In 1968, one in four employed people in France was unionised; 30 years later, the figure is one in 10.

Other statistics suggest the Left did triumph, in a sense. The real winner in the next 30 years

was a form of bureaucratic, welfare socialism. Over-taxed France and the over-manned state which even the present Socialist-led government is sworn to change, owes its origins in part to 1968. In the 12 years after the revolt, welfare spending rose by 10 per cent of GNP; the annual hiring of state employees increased by one-third. By the end of the 1970s, unemployment was also rising to its present steep level (3,000,000, compared to 200,000 in 1968). But the pain of high joblessness – felt mostly by the working class – until recently – has left the former '68 students, and their intellectual successors, relatively unmoved.



Women (left) in Paris last year demonstrating against a crackdown on illegal immigration; and (above) riots in Paris in May 1968 when students barred access to the Boulevard Saint-Michel

Yeltsin's words go missing on the Net

By Phil Reeves
in Moscow

WITH a team of advisers on hand to correct any gaffes and to edit his lengthy replies, Boris Yeltsin made his first public appearance in cyberspace yesterday and – even in this spin doctor's paradise – became the focus of a strange controversy.

Following in the footsteps of a diverse crowd of celebrities – from Mikhail Gorbachev and Tony Blair to the disgraced Los Angeles detective Mark Fuhrman – the Russian president spent half an hour as the on-line guest of the US cable company MSNBC in an event that was, absurdly, termed a "chat".

His performance, billed by one Moscow Internet provider as "the coolest site of the day", was enthusiastically anticipated in his vast home country, where

it featured prominently on television news bulletins all day. In remarks that raise as many concerns as they lay to rest, his on-line audience read that he was trying to prove that he was in good shape, and that he was – sic – in "GOOD health".

The 67-year-old president, who tends to oscillate from manic hyperactivity to exhausted inactivity, said he started the day "at 5am", having woken at 4am. "It does not affect either my appearance or my energy. We don't know what will happen in our lives, but now I am in good health. In the future I don't know."

At this point, the mystery arose. According to a transcript from MSNBC, Mr Yeltsin made an unclear reference to the next election, which could have been taken as a hint that he had not ruled out a third term. "As for

the presidency, for the year 2000 we still have two years. We'll see." However, these words were not present in a Kremlin transcript of the event.

Answering a question about his younger daughter, Tatiana, a senior adviser, he announced that Russia was "not prepared... for my daughter, or any other woman at this time."

It appears the country once governed by Catherine the Great and which reveres Margaret Thatcher is not ready for another matriarchy. Which is not to say that, in the president's eyes, women have no contribution to make. Mr Yeltsin praised his wife, Naina, and two daughters for taking care of him.

The Internet session was part of a move to raise Mr Yeltsin's international profile in the run-up to this week's G8 summit in Birmingham.



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Racism seeps into respectable German life

By Imre Karacs
in Bonn

GERMANY'S most sensationalist tabloid, *Bild Zeitung*, stunned its readers yesterday by claiming that foreigners in their midst were no more inclined to criminality than the natives.

In a prominently displayed article on "beer-ball prejudices", the paper set out to dispel myths that few politicians have had the courage to rebut in the run-up to September's elections. "Internal security" is one of the main themes of the campaign, and the threat to it is almost invariably perceived to be coming from outsiders.

Now the right-wing *Bild* wants to put the record straight. The crime statistics blurted out by politicians are misleading, it warns. Some 28 per cent of all crime is attributed to foreigners, who account for less than 9 per cent of the population. But these offences include infringements of immigration rules, the paper notes. A foreigner who sneaks into the country is thus a criminal on arrival. However, "among foreigners who have

in last month's vote will not pronounce xenophobia just because hardly any foreigners live in their *Land*.

The problem is that anxiety about foreign influences is not confined to society's losers.

"Foreigners are guests in our country," declared a visiting politician from Bonn, addressing a rally four days before the Saxony-Anhalt vote on the market square of Magdeburg.

He was speaking about crime at this point, and could not help noticing all the DVU posters on the lamp-posts. "Criminal Foreigners Out," the posters screamed. "Foreigners who do not abide by the law can make themselves scarce," intoned the statesman on the rostrum. His name was Helmut Kohl: the same man who brought us the euro and all that peace and harmony on our continent.

His remark was barely noticed by the German media. The "linkage" between crime and foreign origin is an axiom. Russians are brothel-keepers or gangsters, Poles are indecent car thieves or hyper-active building labourers who steal German jobs, and Africans are shop-lifters.

The biggest groups, the Turks, are something else. As *Bild* points out, the criminal rate among them is extremely low, yet they are seen to pose other dangers to German society. Turks are said to be given to religious fanaticism; their alien ways trouble the majority. There is just one MP of Turkish origin – a Greek.

A tiny proportion of "guest workers" have obtained German passports in the past quarter-century. A recent attempt to offer third-generation immigrants the prospect of automatic German citizenship was torpedoed earlier this year by right-wingers in Chancellor Kohl's coalition. Non-Germans, as Mr Kohl emphasises, must remain "guests". Prospects for social advancement in this limbo are, therefore, limited.

In reality, "foreigners" and German thoroughbreds live together without much friction, at least in the west. The only reason the "foreigner question" has gained such prominence recently is that Chancellor Kohl has an election to win in September.

He cannot, as he would like, campaign on tax reform and job creation, because he has already failed to deliver on past promises. He cannot trumpet his greatest achievement – European monetary union – because the majority of Germans detest the euro. That leaves him "internal security", the magic phrase that hits the right-wing button every time. And since he has had 16 years to strengthen law and order, the problem needing to be fixed must be a new one. Step right forward, you malingerer "guests".

The opposition must remain silent, because they are seen to be lacking foreigner-bashing credentials. "There are two kinds of election themes," a se-

Helmut Kohl: "Foreigners who break the law can make themselves scarce"

lived with us for a long time, the crime rate is lower than among German citizens".

Coming from *Bild*, this kind of expletive is no less startling than a pro-German editorial would be in the Sun. For readers who could bear to continue, a litany of negatives lay in store. It was not true settlers from the former Soviet Union were being pampered with generous state handouts and pensions, the article declared. And, most shockingly, foreigners did NOT take away jobs from Germans. They mostly did work no German was prepared to do. The country had to import 180,000 seasonal workers from Eastern Europe, for instance, to help with this year's harvest.

For all *Bild*'s commendable effort, it would be premature to expect the beer halls to transform into temples of multi-culturalism overnight. Record unemployment is generating an underclass seething with discontent, and it is not easy to blind their prejudice with simple arithmetic. The angry young men of Saxony-Anhalt, who flocked to the racist German People's Union (DVU)

Nation debates best place for the comma

COMMAS, hyphens and double consonants hurtled through the air in Germany's Constitutional Court yesterday as its venerable judges in velvet robes grappled with dictionaries, writes Imre Karacs. It was the first day of their deliberations over the greatest intellectual undertaking of the German-speaking people this century.

Since 1901 philologists have been trying to agree over the correct spelling of imported words like "restaurant" and the arcane rules of punctuation. All in the aid of *Rechtschreibreform*, the epoch-making attempt to tidy up the language and, allegedly, to simplify it.

The project is finished, the books have been printed, but in place of the order their endeavour had sought to create, chaos reigns. One of the lawyers who took the new rule-book to the country's supreme legal authority says

his children "no longer know what is right".

The plaintiff's twins are nine years old. In their first years at school, they were well on their way to learning the 212 rules pertaining to German spelling. After the reform, only 112 are to remain.

And to prove that the scholars have not wasted the past 97 years, they have also discarded many of the commas that bedevil the average German sentence. The new user-friendly German is democratic, too. For the first time in a century, writers will be given a choice of spellings for some words. Unfortunately, while the number of rules may have been reduced, the number of exceptions has gone up proportionately.

That is not what bothers the twins, however. The reform has faced a series of legal challenges. A verdict is expected in September, at the start of the new school year.



Despite the low crime rate among Turks, many Germans are troubled by their "alien ways"

Photograph: Sipa Press/Rex Features

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World turns on India over N-tests

By Peter Popham
in Delhi

INDIA spent an uncomfortable first day as the sixth and latest member of the club of self-declared nuclear nations. Australia and New Zealand recalled their high commissioners, Japan threatened to cut off aid, China said it was "gravely concerned" and everyone from the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to Bill Clinton wagged their heads sorrowfully at the testing of three nuclear weapons, including an H-bomb, at an underground site in the Rajasthan desert.

Closer to home, however, the news was greeted with delight. Pakistan was caught off balance and appeared stunned. Dominating the front page of *Dawn*, a respected Pakistani national daily, was an enormous colour photograph of a mushroom cloud, uncaptioned. Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Ghulam Ayub Khan, told parliament: "The responsibility for dealing a death blow to the global efforts of nuclear non-proliferation rests squarely with India."

Pakistan's top nuclear scientist, Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan, spoke truthfully when he said: "We had been feeling for a long time that India will carry out a thermonuclear test." But that was the beauty of India's timing: 24 years is a long time to wait for the other shoe to drop, and so well was the secret of the test protected that the rest of the world had to scramble to respond.

One reason that even India's neighbours were lulled into complacency was that the Defence Minister in the coalition government, George Fernandes, an old-fashioned socialist, has in the past spoken out against India's nuclear capability. The government's "National Agenda for

Governance", echoing the manifesto of the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Hindu nationalists who dominate it, had trailed Monday's test with what appears with hindsight to be stark clarity: "To ensure the security, territorial integrity and unity of India," it stated, "we will... exercise the option to conduct nuclear weapons." But everyone, including many inside the government, assumed such an event must be a long way down the road; the more so because Mr Fernandes had implied that "exercising" that option would not take place until the newly established National Security Council had carried out its strategic defence review.

CIA caught napping
The chairman of the US Senate intelligence committee yesterday called the CIA's apparent failure to pick up India's nuclear test preparations yesterday as a "colossal failure... perhaps the biggest one in recent years", writes Mary Dejevsky. Calling for hearings as early as this week, Richard Shelby said: "We want to know why this happened, how this happened, who was asleep, why they were asleep."

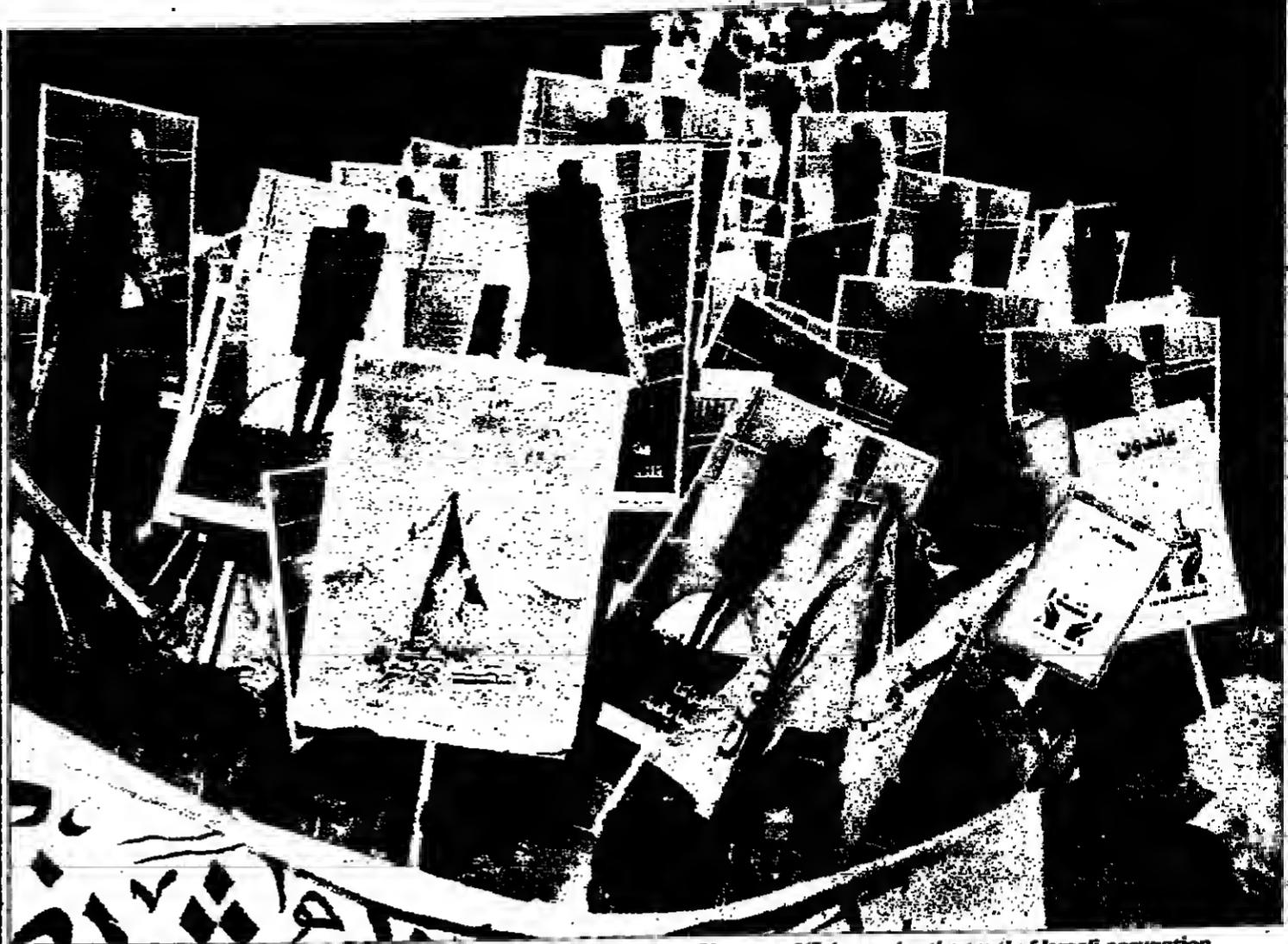
The Indian media's response was jubilant. "The thermonuclear explosion on Monday has placed India next only to the United States and Russia in terms of nuclear capability," the *Times of India* quoted "defence experts" as saying. "Explosion of self-esteem," burred the *Pioneer*. The *Economic Times* warned of the risk of "economic implosion", and a columnist in the same paper opined that the test "shifts India from the sensible position of aiming for de-

terrence capacity to the delusion of grandeur that it should aim for superpower status". But these were lonely voices.

As the government is led by Hindu nationalists, who have not held power for more than a fortnight before and who are often labelled "fascists" by their opponents, some foreign commentators have seen the hand of political extremism behind the nuclear tests. In one sense this is correct: the Congress government of Narasimha Rao was dissuaded from testing weapons in 1995 by American threats of sanctions, and the dithering of this government's predecessor, the inappropriately named United Front, could never have summoned the necessary resolution. This sudden and bold initiative reveals a new and decisive attitude in Indian government – one whose first imperative, one might say, is not to be cowed.

But the inference that this pushes the government into an extreme position vis-à-vis their parliamentary opponents is quite wrong. Spokesmen of parties representing nearly all shades of opinion (except the Marxist left, which said nothing) joined in congratulating the government. "It is a matter of pride, and it proves India is second to none," said the former prime minister, Inder Kumar Gujral. Madhavrao Scindia of the Congress party said: "The tests are the logical culmination of the process initiated by Indira Gandhi in 1974. Every sovereign country needs to ensure that adequate steps are taken to safeguard the country's security interest."

Such opinions echo the common man's view that, for all its size, India is pushed around by other nations far too easily. Monday put a stop to that notion.



Palestinians in the West Bank refugee camp at Balata yesterday marking 50 years of living under the tent of Israeli occupation

Albright gambles on PR battle with Israel

By Mary Dejevsky
in Washington

THE UNITED STATES Administration brought its diplomatic stand-off with Israel into the public arena yesterday in a bold and calculated move to turn up the pressure on the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and win the battle for public opinion.

Less than 24 hours before Mr Netanyahu was due to meet the US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright,

for a make-or-break meeting on the peace process in Washington, Ms Albright gave a lecture to the National Press Club in the US capital setting out some of the US peace proposals that Israel has been so reluctant to embrace.

The lecture, arranged less than a day in advance and designed for an audience that would include all major media outlets and commentators in the US capital, represented a direct challenge to Mr Netanyahu. He had indicated he would use a private

visit to the US later this week to take his case straight to the American public and lobby personally on Capitol Hill.

It was also a challenge to the influential Jewish lobby which last month persuaded 81 out of 100

Senators to sign an open letter to President Bill Clinton appealing to him not to make the terms of the latest US peace proposals public. The letter argued such tactics would bring unacceptable pressure to bear on Israel and undermine Mr Ne-

tanyahu's negotiating position. A major Jewish group yesterday requested an urgent meeting with Mr Clinton, saying it was concerned about a possible change in US Middle East policy.

Some of the details of the US proposals, including a plan to give Israel a contingency role in the security of part of the land that would revert to Palestinian rule, have gradually seeped into the public domain. Most of the specifics, though, have been kept under wraps.

Former minister killed in Colombia election violence

By Phil Davison
in Bogota

COLOMBIA'S presidential election campaign was thrown into turmoil yesterday after a former defence minister was shot dead in the capital, Bogota.

Retired General Fernando Landazabal Reyes, 76, defence minister in the early Eighties and adviser to presidential candidate General Harold Bedoya, was walking alone from his apartment to his office in northern Bogota when two men pulled alongside in a red car, and shot him three times in the head. The car was later found abandoned nearby.

General Bedoya is running a distant fourth in the 31 May presidential election, which has already been marred by a series of killings, bomb blasts on candidates' offices, left-wing guerrilla attacks and massacres by right-wing paramilitaries. Despite having little chance of the presidency, General Bedoya has become an influential political figure through an aggressive campaign.

As General Landazabal's body, covered by a sheet, lay on the pavement yesterday morning, Colombia's army commander General Hugo Galan said the killing could have been the work of any of various sides in Colombia's violence. "Subversives [left-wing guerrillas] could be behind it. Private justice could be behind it," he said.

There was immediate widespread speculation that left-wing paramilitaries had carried out the killing. General Landazabal's body was later removed from the scene by police. The killing came just days after the killing of another former defence minister, General Belisario Betancur, in 1984, and has raised fears of a return to the violence of the 1980s.

Wingers may have killed the conservative retired general in retaliation for last month's assassinations of a leading human rights lawyer and a former communist party activist. Many Colombians believe right-wing "death squads," possibly linked with the armed forces, were behind those killings.

General Landazabal, defence minister of President Belisario Betancur in the early Eighties, was sacked in 1984 after publicly opposing proposed peace talks between the Betancur government and Marxist rebels.

Yesterday, he was walking from his home to his office as he did every morning. He had stopped using bodyguards many years ago, friends said. Shortly before 8am, neighbours heard four shots, saw the retired general slumped on the pavement and saw a red car screech away.

"This act is part of the escalating violence that is attempting to destabilise the electoral process by means of ideological crimes and radicalise positions against peace," President Ernesto Samper said after the murder.

Mr Samper was badly tainted by accusations that he received funds from the Cali cocaine cartel during his 1994 election campaign, and is not running on 31 May. Andres Pastrana, a former mayor of Bogota, is the clear front-runner, although short of the 50 per cent vote needed to avoid a head-to-head run-off next month with the second-placed finisher.

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Shanty trading the norm as Zambia's industries wither

ZAMBIA has become a nation of traders. It is impossible to enter a shop or office in central Lusaka without having to squeeze through row after row of ramshackle roadside stalls.

On the main streets they sell shoes, bags, clothes, electrical equipment. In residential areas it is small amounts of food or individual cigarettes arranged in delicate patterns to disguise the fact that the seller has not much stock.

"It's great," a World Bank official told me, "economic activity on such a scale has to be a good sign." He would say that street trading sprang up in 1993 soon after Zambia's new government brought in an economic-reform programme inspired by the World Bank and IMF. In Zambia today no one seems to make, mine or grow anything: they are all selling to one another.

When you look closely at the stalls you find they are selling identical produce at identical prices. And business is poor. "You can go all day without selling," said a trader who travels to Zimbabwe by bus to buy stock. "That's terrible, because you have to sell at knockdown prices, so turnover is crucial."

At the poorer end of the scale the shanty trader can end up eating unbought stock, leaving no money to replenish it. "I used to sell tomatoes but too much didn't sell and went bad. So I switched to this," said Matilda Phiri, a widow. She now smashes rock into gravel

POSTCARD FROM
AFRICA
Paul Vallely

in the hope of making a little money selling it to a builder. A diplomat from one of the nations to which Zambia owes a large chunk of its foreign debt said: "It's all trade, and it's good. If maize passes through Zambia in transit from South Africa to the Congo that's a worthwhile trade. It creates jobs."

Things look different to the hungry of the Copper Belt who see the cereal pass by on its way to the Congo, where it sells at a good price. The market is working perfectly in this, matching supply to demand, taking the food to where there is the money to pay for it. The shame is that ordinary Zambians do not have the cash, nor do their businesses. Part of the reform demanded by the West is large-scale privatisation. Some 215 of the 315 state businesses have been sold in a programme which the World Bank sees as "the wonder of Africa".

But Zambian entrepreneurs cannot afford to buy. Most of the businesses have been sold to foreigners. CROSSES for the tombs of Tsar Nicholas II and his family will be cut from a cypress from the family's former estate at Livadia in the Crimea. Russia's last tsar is to be buried in St Petersburg on 17 July, the 80th anniversary of his execution by the Bolsheviks. The family spent its last summers at Livadia.

Akihito bid to bury hatchet

EMPEROR Akihito acknowledged that the Second World War still haunted Japan's relations with Britain, but pledged to work for improved ties during his state visit. He made the remarks at a rare briefing at which he called the war "very unfortunate". The comments appeared designed in part to head off criticism of the visit from British veterans. — AP, Tokyo

Kosovo clash

TWO ethnic Albanians were killed and a policeman was wounded in Pristina, capital of Serbia's southern province of Kosovo. Fighting between police and separatists has been moving closer to Pristina in recent weeks. — Reuters, Pristina

Whale toll

MORE than 18,000 whales have been killed since a moratorium came into effect 12 years ago, the World Wildlife Fund said. Norway and Japan received the harshest criticism. A legal loophole allows them to kill whales for "scientific reasons".

— AP, Gland, Switzerland

Tsar's cross

CROSSES for the tombs of Tsar Nicholas II and his family will be cut from a cypress from the family's former estate at Livadia in the Crimea. Russia's last tsar is to be buried in St Petersburg on 17 July, the 80th anniversary of his execution by the Bolsheviks. The family spent its last summers at Livadia.

— AP, Moscow

There was immediate widespread speculation that left-wing paramilitaries had carried out the killing.

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لدى الراشد

Sorry seems to be the hardest word

Sir Elton John and his manager John Reid have been friends for years and suffered their fair share of rows. So why have they split up for good? By Pierre Perrone

THE ANNOUNCEMENT yesterday that Sir Elton John had parted with long-time manager John Reid may have surprised most people but the writing was probably on the wall at the beginning of the year.

Back in January, disclosures of Sir Elton's lavish lifestyle and spiralling expenses made the *Daily Mirror* front page. Trainee solicitor and obsessive Elton aficionado Benjamin Peil had hacked into various computers connected to the singer's organisation. Peil had also sifted through dustbins outside the offices of John Reid Enterprises and obtained credit-card statements.

The tabloids had a field day, highlighting an occasion when Sir Elton had spent more than half a million pounds in 24 hours. Visits to jewellers, designer shops, florists and auction houses were all taking their toll on the superstar's finances. A warning letter from accountants Price Waterhouse to Sir Elton's management rang alarm bells. Despite an upcoming world tour, a sponsorship agreement with Citibank and a multimillion-dollar deal to write more Disney soundtracks, the singer was said to be eight weeks away from running out of cash. Sure, money was still rolling in, but with earnings from all his single releases going his AIDS foundation and the huge royalties from *Candle In The Wind* earmarked for the Diana Fund, he had to slow down the rate of his spending.

Reid, a long-time associate and confidant, probably read the singer the riot act to try

to help him get his finances and his act in order. The pair had a tumultuous relationship over the years and even fought physically before kissing and making up. This time, however, there seemed to be no going back.

Coming from a working-class background in Paisley, Reid can be blunt at times. He studied to be a marine engineer and for a while, he performed with a folk group around his native Scotland. In 1969, when he was only 20, Reid moved to London to work for Ardmore-Beechwood, a music publishing firm which was part of EMI.

Keen and knowledgeable, Reid became UK manager for the American Tamla Motown label, then distributed by EMI. He would select releases for the British market and work on their promotion. His business acumen led him to pick "Tears Of A Clown", a 1967 Smokey Robinson and The Miracles album track, for single release.

When the song reached number one in Britain, the American company followed suit and the US release sold more than a million copies in 1970.

Elton John, then a struggling performer but already a big soul fan and compulsive record collector, visited friend David Cocker at EMI. Reid's office was the next one along the corridor of EMI old's Manchester Square headquarters and all three would chat away about music for hours. Soon Reid and Elton became more than pure flatmates. Reid arranged for Elton to meet one of his idols, Stevie Wonder. Later, Reid accompanied Elton on his

first American tour. Over the years, the singer had been advised and managed by the likes of Muff Winwood, song publisher Dick James (who was later sued by Elton for control over his publishing), Steve Brown and Ray Williams. In March 1971, the singer appointed Reid as his manager in place of the latter.

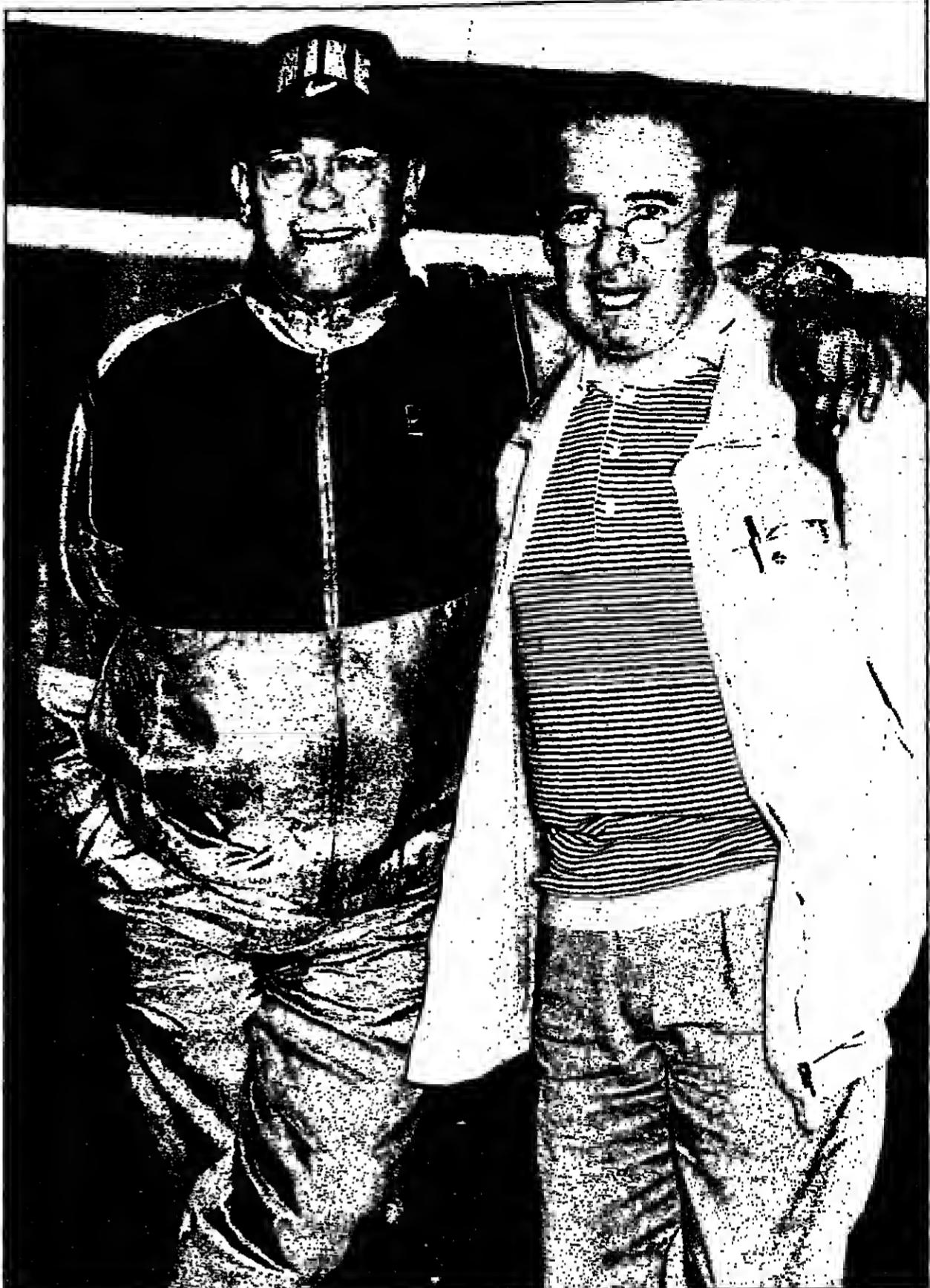
Within a year, the businessman formed John Reid Enterprises. As Elton took off around the world, he negotiated a huge American deal with MCA Records for \$8m dollars over five years. In 1973, like the Beatles and the Rolling Stones before him, Elton decided to form his own record company: Rocket Records.

Reid was heavily involved, along with Elton associates, such as lyricist Bernie Taupin and producer Gus Dudgeon. The Rocket team helped mastermind the mid-1970s comeback of Neil Sedaka and gave Cliff Richard his first Top Ten hit in the US with "Devil Woman". However, the label's biggest success came in 1976 with "Don't Go Breaking My Heart", Elton's infectious duet with Kiki Dee. Other acts to appear on Rocket included Judie Tzuke and The Lambrettas, but rumoured link-ups with Queen and 10CC, which would have put the label on a stronger footing, never materialised.

Over the years, Reid has acted as manager and consultant for various artists including Queen, Kiki Dee, Simple Minds, Billy Connolly, Barry Humphries (and his Dame Edna alter-ego), George Michael and, until the end of last year, Riverdance star Michael Flatley. Yet, Reid never quite managed to establish a powerbase away from his main artist and major client.

Sometimes difficult, always neatly dressed, something of a gourmet, bon vivant and an amateur cook, "Reidy" (as his associates are allowed to call him) seemed to have overcome his drinking problem around the same time as his charge fought his various addictions. Reid often defended Elton to the hilt. In 1974, he even served three weeks in jail after punching journalist David Wheeler in New Zealand. Reid has already earned a fortune put at a conservative \$100m.

For Sir Elton, a possible way out of the financial mire and undoubtedly huge financial settlement coming Reid's way would be a stockmarket listing à la David Bowie. Investors could buy shares in him and profit from investing in a song catalogue which is reportedly worth more than £100m. Lyricist Bernie Taupin will have his say on the matter.



Sir Elton with John Reid (above) in happier times, and with other long-term friend Bernie Taupin (left)



HARD MEN: MANAGERS WITH ATTITUDE

Don Arden

Over the years, represented The Small Faces, The Move, Black Sabbath and Electric Light Orchestra. Not averse to dangling rival managers from windows. The late and infamous Peter Grant, who oversaw the rise of Led Zeppelin, learned most of tricks from him.

Bill Curbishley

Helped The Who sort out their finances when they left Chris Stamp and Kit Lambert. Now looks after Jimmy Page and Robert Plant, as well as surviving

members of The Who, Judas Priest and Curve.

Roger Davies

The Australian single-handedly resurrected the careers of Tina Turner and Joe Cocker. Now handles M-People and Janet Jackson in Europe.

Allan Klein

In the late 1960s, renegotiated deals for The Rolling Stones and The Beatles. Was later sued by Paul McCartney over the break-up of Apple. Recently managed to

secure for his ABCKO company the whole of the publishing of The Verve's "Bittersweet Symphony" after the band admitted to sampling an orchestral version of "The Last Time".

Rod Smallwood

Nicknamed small-wafer, the Iron Maiden manager has cornered the heavy metal market (Bruce Dickinson, Wasp, Hellion) but shows signs of diversifying with Catherine Wheel and Feline. Recently floated his Sanctuary company on the stockmarket.

It's not the leaving of Liverpool that grieves me

Beryl Bainbridge is finished with her native city. That didn't stop her party setting her latest novel there. By Michael Glover

HIGH, neo-classical book shelving, a lovely, velvet-covered window seat from which to admire a prospect of beeches; a docile, sun-struck audience; and, suddenly in the foreground, a single, jarring note; some small, slight women, hurrying, lurching, up the room towards a table, clutching a thin book and a spilling wine glass, 10 long minutes late for an appointment with herself.

Beryl Bainbridge turns to face us. The face, gaunt, intense, tapering, is rather seamed and crumpled looking as if it's spent too long beneath the old horse-hair mattress on that cast-iron bed up in the attic. She is wearing a flower-print frock underneath an almost ankle-length coat with high, puffed shoulders that looks as though it might once have belonged to one of the highway men that frequented these parts – until the motor-car killed them off.

She switches on the intense light of her smile, switches it off again, and then apologises for herself, quite needlessly. "Although it is partly set in Liverpool, I'm not going to read this," – she shakes her new novel, *Master Georgie*, about in the air a bit to get some light into it – "in a Liverpool accent," she says, this famous daughter of Liverpool. "For a start, I was sent to elocution classes as a little girl... and, anyway, the kinds of accents you hear on television these days – Brookside or Cilla Black – are pure pastiche..." she



hisses disapprovingly. She bends towards the audience as she reads, one hand propped against the back of a chair. The other swarms around in the air, gesturing, stabbing out. She speaks vehemently, matter of factly, as if this is the plainest of plain tales, and it's just a matter of ramming it down our throats. Her mouth is very

mobile, and often very wide open, too, when she reads.

The novel is set, in part, during the Crimean War. When she describes the dead man with flies buzzing at his mouth, his flesh the colour of bad meat, she pauses, biting down on her lip. There is not a word to spare about this writing, and to hear her reading it is like watching

someone unpack a fine set of precision tools.

When it comes to questions, she belts them all straight back. She's sitting on the chair now, but leaning forward and out of it, alert, combative, which means that the chair is on two legs the whole time. No, she's not much of a reader of contemporary fiction. Why should she read

Rushdie? She doesn't know a thing about India, and she doesn't want to know. It's so far from Liverpool. She's never read Evelyn Waugh either. She found him so peculiar because he never actually described anybody. Then she thinks for a minute, chewing on that lower lip again. "When I was young, I read that chap who died on a cheeky wink."

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Main picture: purple vest, £90 and grey tube skirt, £35, by Issey Miyake Pleats Please, 20 Brook Street, W1 (enq. 0171 351 0903). Liberty, Regent Street, London W1

Top left: white cotton crumpled shirt/jacket, £79, from Homme, at Liberty, Regent Street, London, W1; aqua pleat skirt, £95, by Katharine Hamnett, 20 Sloane Street, London SW1 (enq. 0171 287 6767.)

Bottom left: pink cotton shirt, £58, from Jigsaw branches nationwide (enq. 0171 491 4484); black pleat skirt, £110, from Whistles, 12 St Christopher's Place, London, W1 and 9 High Street, Oxford (enq. 0171 497 4484); black shoes, £46.95 by Birkenstocks, 37 Neal Street, London, WC2 (mail order and enq. 0800 132 194)

Above: black cotton vest, £15, from Jigsaw branches nationwide (enq. 0171 491 4484); white pleat skirt, £229, by Helmut Lang from Harrods, Knightsbridge, London SW1, (enq. 0171 731 2324)

Below: black backless vest, £150, by Ann Demeulemeester; beige pleat skirt, £295, by Jean Paul Gaultier, both from Harvey Nichols, Knightsbridge, London SW1 (enq. 0171 235 5000.)

Welcome pleats back into the fold

Designers have gone back to the drawing board (the one in school) to update the once dreaded pleated skirt.

By Tamsin Blanchard

PHOTOGRAPHER: KEVIN FOORD
STYLIST: CHARLIE HARRINGTON
MAKE UP: ALEX BABSKY AT MANDY COAKLEY
HAIR: MATTHEW CROSS AT STUART WATTS
USING NICKY CLARKE HAIROMATHERAPY
MODEL: LOUISE LAURITZEN AT MODELS I

FOR most women, pleated skirts have thoroughly nasty connotations. They bring back painful memories of the box pleat school pinafore and the tennis skirt that was so short your regulation navy blue knickers were permanently on show. Box pleats, you see, do oot suit everyone.

The girl who still had to lose her puppy fat would end up having her pleats stretched out like a concertina over her wobbly hips while the skinny girl in the class – the one who refused to drink her milk at break-time – always looked like she was drowning in an excess of grey polyester. And that was just box pleats. Schools with a more liberated outlook on uniform would allow a kick pleat on an A-line skirt with an inverted pleat. Both variations were usually made of something akin to cardboard and would sit stiffly on the hips. The pleat meant that pencil skirts with splits were strictly not allowed.

Despite these inauspicious beginnings, pleats have become the fashion designer's new best friend. Now we have not just box, knife, suray or kick pleats; we have the conceptual pleat, a pleat that is uncompromisingly wrapped around the body like softly corrugated iron, courtesy of the most innova-

tive and cerebral of designers, Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons. Such artful pleatings are only for the committed however (insane or otherwise). For the rest of us, it's back to the old school pleats of our youth.

The great turn of the century couturier Fortuny was the first designer to be bitten by the pleating bug. Where the Comme des Garçons pleats are stiff and rough, Mariano Fortuny's were fluid and fragile. In 1909, Fortuny, who crossed the worlds of art, textiles and fashion, patented his pleating process inspired by Grecian robes. His Delphos dress, a long tube of impossibly tightly-pleated silk, was designed to be worn with a silk cord tied around the waist. It was the simplest but most effective of garments and is one of the great classics of twentieth century design.

Occasionally Fortuny pleats come up for auction, but the process has been updated by the Japanese designer Issey Miyake who has dedicated a whole collection to his stretchy synthetic pleats. He first introduced them to his collections in 1989 and they were so popular that he launched a separate line called Pleats Please in 1993, designed to be light,

comfortable and to shape to the contours of the body. Each wearer gives the pleats their own unique shape. The Pleats Please range is relatively affordable (from £70 for a scarf up to £260 for a long coat) and is Miyake's idea of a Utopian way of dressing. The simplicity of the pleated fabric allows the clothes to cross boundaries of age and size, to be crumpled into a small bag when travelling and to be layered according to the temperature.

While Mr Miyake might believe that pleats are for everyone, other designers are not so optimistic. Marc Jacobs used sunray and box pleats in his collection, leaving fashion editors walking away from his New York show shaking their heads despondently. If Kate Moss looks like a frump in bulky pleats, then what hope for the rest of us?

Jacobs himself agrees that pleats are not for every woman. But as his and other designers' collections give us little option this summer, (and the high street will follow in the autumn) we have chosen five different pleats for you to consider. Just remember one simple rule: the bigger your hips are, the tighter the pleats should be. And never, ever be tempted to wear socks (or navy knickers) with your box pleats.



OUT OF THE CLOSET

Gary Rhodes whips himself up into a frenzy over his passion for fancy designer suits



MY classic, all-time piece from the back of my wardrobe, is a Fujiwara suit. It will never age and one day I'm going to put it in a frame for years of enjoyment. I'm not a real fashion fanatic, left to my own devices, I'm comfortable in a nice Ted Baker shirt and easy trousers, but I do have a bit of a 'thing' for suits. I'd like to be able to say that my favourite menswear designer is Fujiwara, but so is John Rocha and I just can't decide between them. They both design real classic suits with a different edge, and I'm a huge fan. I must have at least three or four 3-piece suits by each of them. My latest suit is coming from Serena Kelsey, and I'm really excited about it, waiting for it to be finished is the worst part of having a suit made. I must confess though, that I did make one particularly bad purchase, in the shape of a Moschino jacket; it's black with white spots and red streaks. Every time I put it on, I look like a magician, in fact every one of those Moschino jackets should have been sold with a complimentary top hat and deck of cards.

Kate Lloyd

WHAT'S HOT

Stain your skin with henna "tattoos", they won't scar and are hip in Hollywood

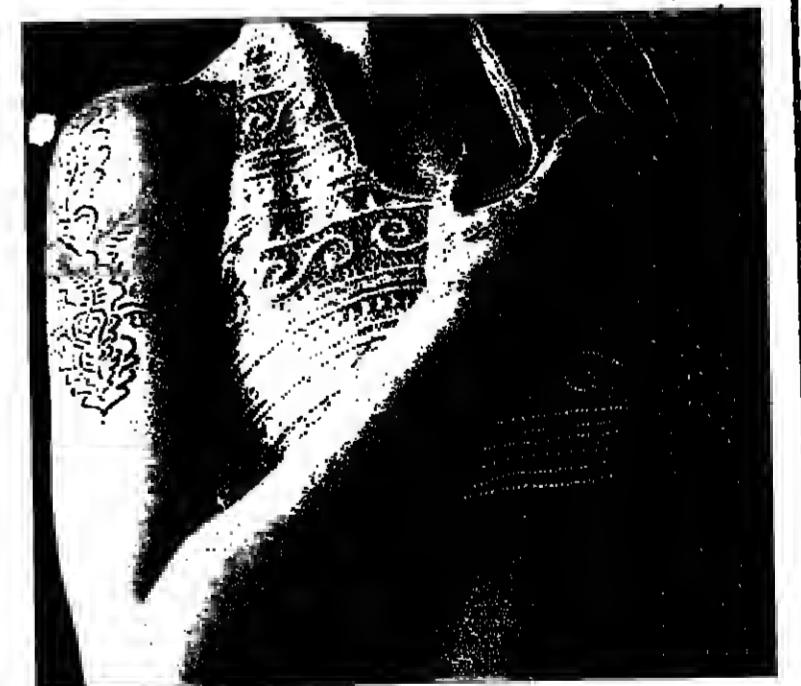
DEMI MOORE, Madonna, Mira Sorvino and Liv Tyler are all at it. They have found Mehndi, the traditional Indian henna "tattoo". While the stars have their favourite designs painted by experts, there's a DIY version to try out at home. If you need a hobby, or just have a lot of free time, then you too can try the Mehndi body painting kit.

With a two-hour resting time for the little plastic cone of henna, eucalyptus oil and magical "milding crystals", and a two-to-eight-hour drying period, it is surprising that most of the patterns are for the hands. If you don't suffer from mundane worries such as turning on the TV or going to the toilet, then go for it.

The plastic "piping" cone is very tricky to use, and I had to resort to using cocktail sticks and pins to spread the paste. Practice hard, be willing to make some long-lasting mistakes, and you too can look like a movie star.

The Mehndi body painting kit is available from bookshops, or Books by Post, 01624 675 137, and costs £12.99.

Hannah Hunter



Mikado girls go everywhere



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Biotech price-tag on life and death

NOW YOU know. You can't patent a mouse. (People have tried). Why not? Because the European Parliament says so. The Life Patents Directive endorsed yesterday by MEPs means that the simple discovery of the genetic material of any living creature cannot, by and of itself, constitute a patentable invention and thus be exploited for commercial purposes. So, every time a drug company finds a new gene it cannot automatically lay claim to it. No one will be able to possess the "design" of mice or rabbits or humans. This should be sufficient reply to those who understandably fear that the big drug firms are intent on practising "bio-piracy". The idea that corporations or governments could "own" the building blocks of life itself is indeed deeply disturbing. The European Parliament were right to reject this dangerous idea.

The directive does, however, permit the patenting of genetic materials if the "inventors" can demonstrate that they have developed a process or mechanism associated with it. So a company could "own" a very special, genetically manipulated, mouse that provides a test for our sensitivity to, say, Alzheimer's disease. The EU's decision thus preserves the economic incentive for the Hoffman LaRoches and the Zenecas of this world to invest in research. There is money to be made in the alleviation of human suffering, and there is nothing intrinsically wrong with this. Clearly the drug companies will only invest in this exciting but expensive new technology if there is something in it for their shareholders. There is an increasing awareness of the investment potential of this field, as the frenzy of corporate activity and leaps in the stock market valuations of pharmaceutical companies attest.

In fact, the real, practical, ethical problem with biotechnology lies in the economics of the later stages of exploitation. A number of companies are developing a gene-based test for breast cancer. If this test is found to be fully reliable then it will obviously have huge potential benefits and, indeed, profits attached to it. A monopoly position for the successful firm will be reached where life or death will be rationed by price. Remember that the company that perfects such a test will have had no need to patent the original genetic material to find itself in such a fortunate position - the development of its discovery is the key element. But then it could also find itself in a similar position by inventing a conventional type of drug.

The real question, therefore, is the extent to which any kind of monopoly should be allowed to exist in the drugs market, genetic or conventional. Perhaps what the European Parliament should look at next is the regulation of these monopolies. The aim of a new independent "Of-drug", analogous to our existing utility regulators, should be to allow pharmaceutical companies to make adequate profits but not completely exclude the competition by charging excessive amounts for the licensing of products. The most difficult ethical dilemmas may well end up being decided by lay economists rather than professors of ethics or, indeed, parliamentarians.

German leaders must turn xenophobic tide

THESE ARE trying times in Germany. Signs of recovery similar to these in labour markets elsewhere are barely visible. Youth joblessness is a scandal, allowing the extreme right to make inroads in the east. The Kohl government stumbles while the challenging Social Democrats seemingly cannot decide whether to move to the right (say, on immigration) or left (on nationalisation) of the governing coalition. It's an era when scapegoats are at a premium, and Germany's foreigners - legal immigrants along with asylum seekers and illegals - are in the firing line.

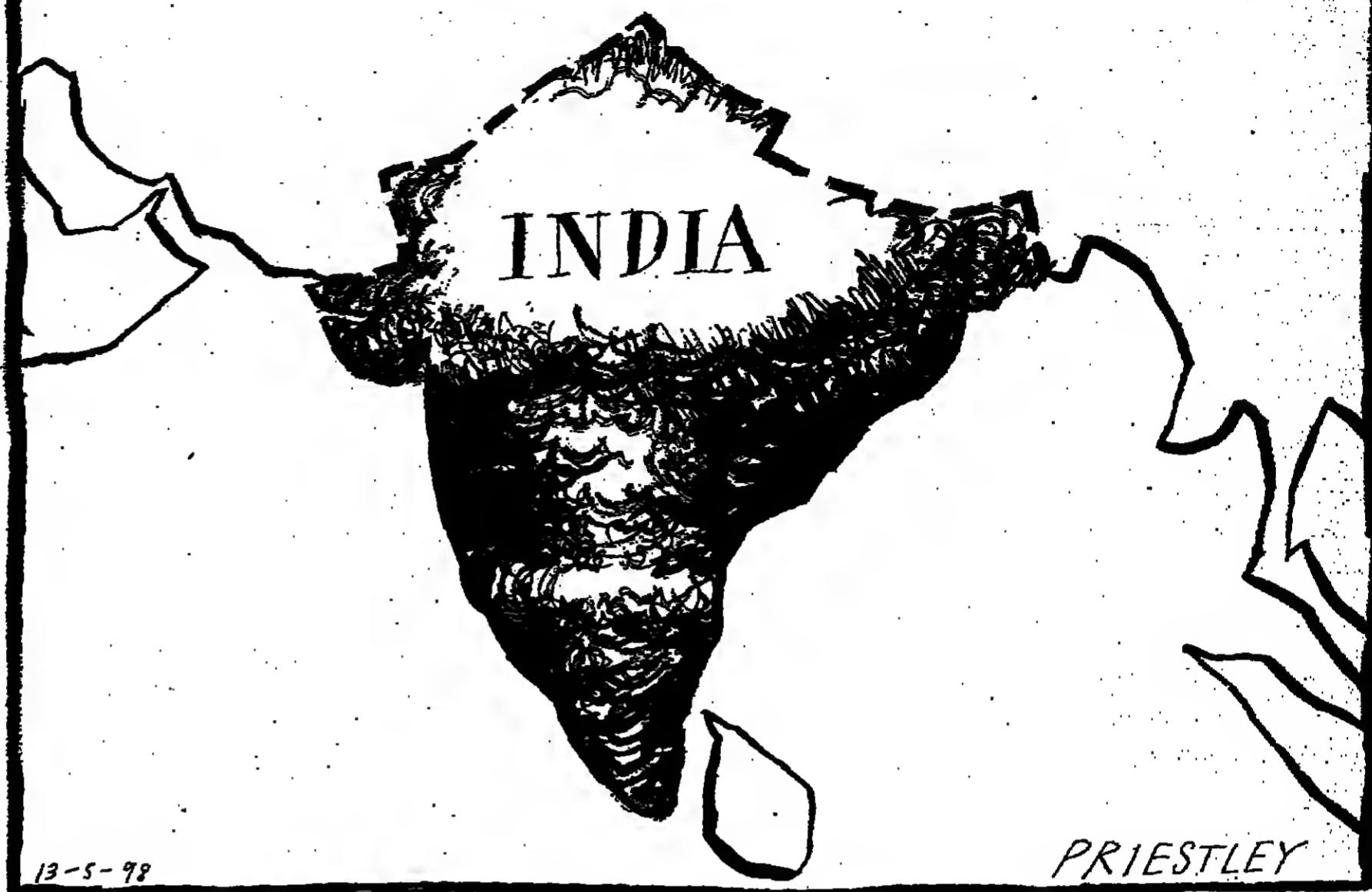
It says something both reassuring and worrying that Germany's leading tabloid the *Bild Zeitung* should yesterday devote a prominent article to rebutting the beliefs that immigrants commit more crime, live off state handouts and take German jobs from natives. None of those prejudices of course holds water.

Germany's problem stems from the sudden replacement of half-hearted liberalism with a harsh policy of exclusion towards asylum-seekers at a time when - especially in the new east German *Länder* - social and economic tensions are rife. Looked at as a whole, Germany's post-war history on accepting foreigners is confused. Did any German leader ever acknowledge that large-scale immigration from Turkey would eventually make for a multicultural society? Successive German governments have been reluctant to see that the country's economic prosperity made it a magnet not just for immigrants from the East (white and relatively easily assimilated) but also for arrivals from the Mediterranean littoral and, more recently, black Africa and the Far East. Too often, German ministers and officials prevaricated, frightened of confronting the shadow of the nation's history.

But now that official policy is to return all but the most obviously oppressed asylum seekers, ministers are in danger of looking merely cruel - especially at a time when xenophobia seems to be rampant. The latest manifestation is the threat by the Foreign Minister, Klaus Kinkel, (a Free Democrat) to chop the German aid budget in order to punish those countries, mainly African and Asian, which are not co-operating in Germany's active repatriation policy.

This is extraordinarily short-sighted since - ultimately - only economic and political development will make those exporters of asylum-seekers fit places to live. Germany is now a great nation again, in terms of population and economic potency. It is time German politicians started acting out a role of greatness on the international stage and stopped behaving like provincials playing to domestic reactionaries.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE TO THE DEAD, THE ORPHANS & THE HOMELESS, WHETHER THE MAD DESTRUCTION IS WROUGHT IN THE NAME OF TOTALITARIANISM OR THE HOLY NAME OF LIBERTY? - Ghandi



Cook's poor judgement

Sir: So what if a British company has broken a UN resolution with the collusion of the Foreign Office? Should we not be reminding ourselves that, theoretically at least, the UN exists to further democracy and protect human rights and if a Security Council resolution goes counter to these aims - as in this case - then it is a bad resolution.

In any case, the people who are directly affected by this action are not the self-righteous members of the Government, the Opposition or the British press. They are the people of Sierra Leone, and has anybody bothered to ask them what they think? We show every sign, as in so many towns, of not being able to see the wood for the trees.

None of this in any way exonerates Robin Cook or satisfactorily explains his behaviour. We now have the bizarre sight of a British Foreign Secretary resolutions to an ethical foreign policy condemning the implementation of a policy which was, in all but the narrow legal sense, completely ethical. Sadly one is forced to conclude that he's just not up to the job. Either in terms of his grasp on the affairs of his department or in terms of his awareness of the political fallout from a perceived cover-up - or possibly both - he has shown an extraordinary lack of judgement.

STUART RUSSELL
Cirencester, Gloucestershire

Sir: In your otherwise excellent coverage of the Sierra Leone arms sales by Sandline you accept two highly doubtful assumptions: that the UN embargo did apply to arms to the recognised government and to Econog (the military arm of the Economic Community of West African States - Ecowas); and that the joint action of the Sierra Leone national guard (Kamajors) and the Econog forces to drive out the junta of army mutineers and the Revolutionary United Front was somehow illegal.

The embargo was adopted on the initiative of the government of Sierra Leone and the Ecowas states and charges Econog and President Kab-

bah's government to serve as implementers. It is therefore highly implausible to suppose that it was intended to apply to them. The UN Charter specifically provides for a lawful government under threat to seek and receive the assistance of friendly states. Sierra Leone's government did so and Ecowas provided assistance.

Sandline's role appears to have been primarily that of a broker procuring arms for cash for President Kabba's government. A recognised government has the right to hire foreign forces and Sandline's single logistical and reconnaissance helicopter can hardly have been crucial in the context of the assault by 10,000 Kamajors and at least 5,000 West African infantry backed by artillery, armoured vehicles, at least 20 helicopters (including gunships), as many fixed wing aircraft and an offshore naval squadron.

The non-communication among the British Diplomatic Service, Foreign Office officials, Foreign Office ministries, Ministry of Defence, DTI and Customs indeed appears inept to the point of a *Carry On* farce but is not a breach of embargo or international law.

Professor REGINALD HERBOLD GREEN
Levex, East Sussex

Sir: There is another aspect of British policy towards Sierra Leone that has all but been overlooked. From mid-1997 until the restoration of President Kabba earlier this year, the UK government slashed aid to Sierra Leone. This appears to have been a deliberate component of the political strategy to dislodge the military junta.

Clearly, humanitarian aid cannot be divorced from the political context in which it is delivered. But here,

the Government's aim to see the Kabba regime reinstated rode roughshod over humanitarian concerns. Aid workers in the region were

clear that well-targeted assistance could have minimised civilian suffering without compromising the international community's political objectives.

The restriction of humanitarian aid to achieve political aims is inexcusable and must not become a precedent for future responses to complex emergencies.

MARGIE BUCHANAN-SMITH
Head of Policy, ActionAid
London N19

India's nuclear tests

Sir: We strongly condemn India's pursuit of nuclear weapons signalled by Monday's nuclear tests (report, 12 May). This extremely serious development could threaten a nuclear arms race in south Asia. It also undermines attempts by many non-nuclear states to make progress on nuclear disarmament.

At the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty meeting in Geneva, which broke up in disarray last Friday, the United States blocked all attempts to make the nuclear weapon states honour the Treaty commitment which binds them to eliminate their nuclear arsenals. The British delegation, despite representing the European Union, made no attempt to play a constructive role.

India,asperated by this lack of progress, is merely imitating Britain's irresponsible example. In the United Nations General Assembly last December, China, alone amongst the nuclear weapon states, voted for a start to negotiations aimed at nuclear weapon abolition. Unless all the nuclear weapon states begin serious multilateral negotiations now, nuclear weapon proliferation is inevitable.

FRANK BLACKBAY
BRUCE KENT
Commander ROBERT GREEN RN
Abortion 2000 UK
London N1

Levex, East Sussex

Sir: I see that Virgin Trains are decking out their staff in new uniforms (Business, 11 May). Thus also do Connex South Central staff parade in peacock blues and yellows.

Am I being a tad old-fashioned

in thinking that train operators

would be better employed in running

more trains, more punctually and

more reliably?

NICK WELLINGS

Brighton, East Sussex

Levex, East Sussex

Heather Henderson

Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire

Blair to host a down-sized economic summit in Brum



HAMISH
MCRAE

STAND by for a weekend of politicians prancing about in front of the cameras, for the economic summit is coming to town. But expect this year for them to prance to a different tune.

The show is coming to Birmingham: the Group of Eight, or G8 as the aficionados, comprising the seven largest economies in the world plus Russia. Actually, the additional member ought by rights to be China, not Russia, for the Chinese economy is far larger than the Russian one. But the Russians were offered economic summit membership as a consolation prize for not fussing too much about the eastward expansion of Nato.

The show will sound important, for Clinton and Yeltsin, etc, will be sampling the delights of Brum, and these are people who inevitably command headlines, though not necessarily for the right reasons. Whether the event actually is important ... well, see what you think.

These summits have been taking place each year for more than 20 years - they started in the bleak days after the first oil shock when the world seemed to be facing economic catastrophe and it seemed helpful to try to co-ordinate economic policies. But in recent years they have degenerated into little more than photo-opportunities, treated by the financial markets, where real power lies, with a mixture of disdain and contempt.

The world has changed. Few people now believe that top-down intervention by governments can improve the world economy, whereas in the 1970s that was received wisdom. The great boom of the last two decades has been built on bottom-up, market-driven ideas. The very fact that Russia should now be the table is testimony to the power of these ideas.

If the world has moved on, the summits haven't. The leaders meet, have their photos taken, produce a tedious communiqué about the state of the world economy written several weeks earlier by their mandarins, have their photos taken again and go home.

But the UK has to host the summit, for it comes here on Buggin's turn. So what do you do? Answer: you try and rebrand it: turn it, so to speak, into a new economic summit, something that reflects more accurately what politicians can and cannot do in the economic sphere. Ideas are powerful, not governments; but politicians - if they are very clever - can package and sell ideas. That is how Mr Blair will be trying to refocus the summit this weekend.

Stage one is to cut the thing down to size. No longer will the finance ministers attend. Finance ministers are always irritated when prime ministers and presidents try to muscle in on their territory, bang on about economics, get things wrong and leave them to pick up the debris in the financial markets the week after. So here is a neat solution. Give the

finance ministers their own G7 (i.e. minus Russia), which they had last weekend, and this weekend the bosses can get on without them.

Stage two is only tackle things where joint government action might be helpful. So there will be no grand visionary stuff about the world economy, no wonder-cure for the melt-down in East Asia; no priggish bullying of Japan to try to crank up its economy (the finance ministers had a go at that last weekend). Instead there will be three or four focused policy initiatives where co-operative action might help a bit.

For example, there will be something on fighting organised crime; for the crime industry, like its more conventional cousins, is going global too. There will be something about coordinating help for the weakest economic region in the world, Africa. There will be something on trying to develop policies that will help people who have been left behind in the 1990s boom; but here the emphasis will be on limited "what works" policies, not the "we can give you jobs" approach that has failed so spectacularly on the Continent, and which accounts for the trouble that Chirac and Kohl find themselves in now.

These all make great sense. Crime is already falling in the US and seems to be falling in the UK too, so give the trend a modest push. Large parts of Africa, at last and achingly slowly, are starting to increase living standards after two lost decades, so give that a further push. As for helping the disadvantaged, note the idea is not to promise blanket welfare solutions, but rather to encourage the wider application of solutions which already seem to be working. These, in general, follow the more innovative US experiments (such as the effort in Wisconsin to get everyone who can possibly work into

Ideas are powerful, not governments; but politicians can package and sell ideas

some kind of job), rather than the unaffordable continental European models.

If this seems a US/UK approach both to economics and to social welfare, it is also a US/UK approach to politics. People like Blair and Clinton no longer pretend to be in charge of things over which they have no control. That is a mug's game because you will inevitably disappoint. People like Kohl and Chirac have cottoned on to that yet, which is why Chirac is a lame-duck, forced to co-habit with a leftist prime minister, and Kohl will be almost certainly be defeated this autumn. Instead you acknowledge the limits of power, don't try and fix what ain't broke, identify areas where you can sell an already dominant idea, and get the credit for articulating people's hopes and fears.

What we will get this weekend, if it works, is not just a new economic summit; not just New Labour applying its *genius* for packaging, but an exercise in new politics. The art is to do not very much, but to tackle a few issues where you are likely to show progress and make that sound brilliant. It is sound-bites, sure, but it is also policy-bites: small, limited initiatives delivered in bite-sized chunks. Watch and be impressed.

Men say one thing and do another - please, tell me something I didn't know



SUZANNE
MOORE

PAUL JOHNSON, "the man who preaches morality to the nation" (in the words of yesterday's *Express*), has apparently been a very naughty boy. He has had an affair for the past 11 years with "freelance journalist" Gloria Stewart, while at the same time ranting on in his inimitable style about family values. I wish, quite honestly, that I was shocked by this news, but, of course, the phenomenon of right-wing men who spout family values in their day jobs and like to be spanked at weekends by their mistresses is one that most of us have become immune to by now.

Somewhere it must be written in the job description of a Tory minister, a successful businessman or a paid moralist that you must have a fragrant wife waiting at home laying out your towels, while you have an affair with your secretary or at least employ a prostitute to degrade you. The sheer predictability of men who dominate public life needing to be dominated in their spare time is as tiring as it is loathsome.

The repertoire of male sexual behaviour is so limited, I could almost feel sorry for them. Almost. Actually, I do feel a bit sorry for Johnson's wife, Marigold, but as she has survived 40 years of being married to a man who, depending on you take, is either a passionate polemicist or a deranged eccentric, I am sure she is tiring as it is loathsome.

Johnson may be a public figure, infamous not only for his vitriol but well documented inaccuracy, but he is out in public office. For many years now the only consistency in Johnson's views has been that they are consistently wrong.

Johnson's private life that I find most depressing is out what he does with his 50-year-old mistress but what he does with Tony Blair.

This once-time admirer of Margaret Thatcher - "She at least gave the impression that we lived in a world of absolute morality, clear distinctions and ethical certainties" - has switched his allegiance to Tony Blair, his new best friend. They lunch together and their tête-à-têtes have led Johnson to conclude that the Prime Minister

"is the first top British leader to recognise that family breakdown is right at the centre of our ills".

Johnson's own contribution to this cause is now laughable.

But as he is also nearly 70 and a grandfather of six he may even qualify as a likable rogue.



Much ado about very little: Yesterday's 'Express' exposed a case of unsurprising hypocrisy

his completely illogical rants against Michael Grade, Channel 4, anyone with looser morals than his own and whoever else he was paid to mauled on behalf of the *Daily Mail*.

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least gave the impression that we lived in a world of absolute morality, clear distinctions and ethical certainties" - has switched his allegiance to Tony Blair, his new best friend. They lunch together and their tête-à-têtes have led Johnson to conclude that the Prime Minister "is the first top British leader to recognise that family breakdown is right at the centre of our ills".

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abortion, single mothers and even transsexuals winning the Eurovision song contest. The truth is that the threat of rabid lefies taking over the world has not been defused by the likes of Johnson but by what in the good old days was their nightmare - a Labour government.

That Johnson, with his pernicious hectoring about family values, should be boistful with his own petard fulfils a different kind of fantasy altogether. One secretly hopes that the offspring of such rent-a-moralists are addicted to crack, that their wives run off with other women, that they are caught with the hands in the till as well as their trousers round their ankles. Unfortunately they merely have affairs, beg forgiveness and - I predict in Johnson's case - write an article about human frailty and the virtues of peccadilloes.

Johnson managed to huff and puff recently about Cook; but I think that Johnson actually believes what he says - that he does believe in family values even though he has had an affair. He is a man of his generation who may think that the secret of a successful marriage is simply to have a wife who puts up with her husband's peccadilloes.

The publications in which he writes tend also to be of the "Do as I say not what I do" variety. Johnson's advice to Mellor was that he should endeavour "to rehabilitate himself by some worthy activity, involving self-sacrifice". May I suggest that, for once, Johnson walks the walk as well as talks the talk and makes the ultimate sacrifice by never writing another word.

What's the hurry to get to France? Take the slow train ...

Stephen Plowden,
says Labour must
learn to say no
to Eurotunnel

THE latest wheeze from Eurotunnel - a road tunnel under the channel - is not an idea that need detain John Prescott long. A road tunnel could have no place in an integrated transport policy based on the selective use of motor vehicles. The idea belongs to the silly season, although it has arrived a little early.

Meanwhile, Mr Prescott is

faced with a much more urgent decision. By the end of this month he has to decide whether to grant London and Continental Railways' request for an extra subsidy of anything up to £1.2bn to build a high-speed rail link from St Pancras to the Channel Tunnel. If he refuses, that would be the end of the project.

This should really be an easy decision too, since even the money promised to LCR so far cannot possibly be justified. But for Mr Prescott to say that would mean acknowledging Labour's share of responsibility for the present situation.

The public money already promised or given to LCR (but recoverable if the line is not built) comes to £2.4bn. The "justification" for this subsidy

was given in a document laid in Parliament in March 1996, but never debated. It was claimed that the line would bring benefits to the public worth, in today's terms, just over £7.5bn. But £6bn of this consists of benefits to Eurostar passengers themselves. There is absolutely no reason to subsidise these travellers. They are all likely to be well-off people, and a significant number will not be British taxpayers.

The only items in the document laid in Parliament that would be a legitimate use of public money are economic regeneration, and a reduction in road congestion and environmental damage. But these benefits were calculated to be worth only £750m, out nearly

enough to justify the subsidy. This figure is not only insufficient, it is also incredible. A 68-mile, high-speed rail link through London and Kent will not improve the environment but will do colossal damage. Nor will it add 75,000 to 80,000 jobs to the economy, as Parliament was asked to believe.

The subsidy to LCR is not the only public cost involved. Compensation for flight also has to be paid. The Conservative Government knew that if

proper compensation was paid, the sums involved might sink the project, so it managed to restrict compensation to cases of "extreme and exceptional hardship" and the maximum amount payable to any one person to £5,000.

How did they get away with all this in Parliament? Originally the Conservatives swore that no public money would go into the link. Nevertheless they wanted it built for reasons of prestige. The journey from Waterloo to the Gare du Nord on the existing track takes only three hours, but it was thought to be an affront to our national pride that the train goes much faster in France than in England.

The Labour Opposition, impressed by the same childish argument, and glad of any stick with which to beat the government, taunted the Conservatives that it was only their ideological free market hang-ups that prevented them backing this glorious technological

marvel with public money. So when the Conservatives changed their minds they knew that they need not fear any scrutiny from the Opposition.

In fact, building this link will not bring Britain any prestige, but cancelling it on the grounds that protecting the environment in London and Kent is more important than chopping 30 minutes off the journey between London and Paris would bring us world-wide respect.

LCR's request for yet more money gives John Prescott the opportunity to get out of this misguided project without too much loss of face. New Labour's reputation for environmental concern and financial responsibility depends on his taking it.

Indecent charge

AS A RESULT of his Easter disruption of the Archbishop of Canterbury's sermon, gay rights campaigner Peter Tatchell is due to appear in Canterbury Magistrate's Court on Friday. The Crown Prosecution Service has changed its original charge of "violent behaviour" to one of "indecent behaviour" under the Ecclesiastical Courts Jurisdiction Act of 1860. Tatchell, who faces two months in prison and who will defend himself in court, told *Pandora* yesterday, "I was held in a police cell for seven hours while they looked for a suitable offence with which to charge me".

He is very concerned lest people now think "I behaved indecently towards the Archbishop". Tatchell has threatened to subpoena Dr. George

Carey in order to establish that his behaviour was not in any way violent or, presumably, "indecent". However, Tatchell himself is bringing charges against a Canterbury Cathedral official who allegedly punched him. When *Pandora* rang Lambeth Palace and asked for the Archbishop's thoughts on the Tatchell case, in specific, and church service protests, in general, their press spokesman said that the Archbishop had never made a statement on the subject in the past. Could he not please say something now, *Pandora* requested. "Unfortunately, he's in Uganda at the moment."

Pray it opens

WHILE we are on holy ground, word

PANDORA Ask Camille

has reached Pandora of a remarkable achievement. According to Russian newsire Itar-Tass, a Russian Orthodox priest has become the first clergymen to reach the North Pole via parachute. Immediately upon landing, Father Viktor Smetanikov planted a cross in the ice and commenced praying. According to the Father Viking, "The pole has a purifying power. It is an exceptional place on the globe and God doesn't allow everyone to go there." However, he added a cautionary note to any other pilgrims tempted to follow in his footsteps. "Praying at the North Pole doesn't seem particularly beneficial."

King's rescue

MOVING from the sacred to the profane, boxing promoter Don King is standing trial in Manhattan for allegedly defrauding Lloyd's with a

bogus \$350,000 insurance claim. The explosively-coiffed King was tried once before on the Lloyd's charge, in 1995. That case ended with a hung jury. Now King may walk free a second time after

the prosecution's star witness, former super lightweight champion Julio Cesar Chavez, suddenly decided - right in the middle of his testimony - that it was an ideal time to return to Mexico, despite the kidnapping charge awaiting him on his arrival. Never a dull moment when Don's around.

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Sir Francis Avery Jones

FRANCIS AVERY JONES became identified with gastroenterology in a way that few other physicians and surgeons have been with any other speciality in Britain. That he achieved such eminence was particularly remarkable, because he did so through his work in a district hospital and not at one of the teaching hospitals at which the leaders of the profession were nearly always based.

Avery Jones was educated at the Sir John Leman School, Bexley, and at St Bartholomew's Hospital Medical School. He qualified in medicine in 1934 and was successively house physician to Professors Sir Francis Fraser, Leslie Wits and Ronald Christie, three of the most distinguished physicians of the time.

In 1936, he obtained a Baly Research Scholarship and was appointed assistant to the professorial medical unit under Wits, where he was introduced to the revolutionary technique, pioneered in Denmark, of liberal feeding for patients with bleeding peptic ulcers, instead of sedation and starvation, and he showed that the fatality of the condition could be dramatically reduced by drip blood transfusion and adequate amounts of water and salts by mouth.

In 1937 he attended (as a guest) the foundation meeting of a gastroenterological club (later to become the British Society of Gastroenterology) which had been organised by Sir Arthur Hirst, fell under his spell, and became committed to gastroenterology for life.

In 1940, Avery Jones was appointed to the staff of the Central Middlesex Hospital, as a physician with a special interest in gastroenterology, where he joined a group of specialists whose joint work was to establish the hospital as a centre of excellence that rivalled the university hospitals in central London. Collaboration, rather than competition, characterised the work: before long Avery Jones had amassed a personal experience of the natural history and prognosis of peptic ulceration that was unique and which he built on by persuading his surgical colleagues to operate on patients directly from his wards, leaving their post-operative care to him; something that was only just beginning to be managed scientifically with detailed attention to biochemical control.

The massive experience that

he gained in this way of the results of different methods of treatment of gastric and duodenal haemorrhage enabled him to lay out a practical programme for managing one of the most complex medical emergencies; this resulted in a progressive and sustained reduction in the fatality of the condition.

Among his many other special interests were the development of gastroscopy, which was among the first to use routinely when the flexible Wolf-Schindler gastroscope became available, and the use of randomised controlled trials, which, with help from me, he was the first to use to assess the value of the myriad treatments that were recommended for gastric and duodenal ulcers. I had joined his group in 1946 with the support of a Medical Research Council grant to study their occupational causes. Our co-operation over more than 20 years established, *inter alia*, that the bland diets then routinely prescribed for therapy were not beneficial, but that the advice to stop smoking was.

Avery Jones was a superb diagnostician and unremiring in his attention to his patients' needs, visiting his wards routinely at 10 o'clock at night to monitor the progress of those who were seriously ill. His clinical skills were recognised by an appointment as consultant gastroenterologist to St Mark's Hospital for diseases of the large bowel, and to the Royal College of Surgeons.

Avery Jones (always just "Avery" to his friends and colleagues) was the antithesis of the television picture of a senior medical consultant; he was quiet, unassertive, attentive to everything a patient had to tell him, but nevertheless radiated confidence and left everyone feeling better for his visit. He was never rushed or flurried (even if sometimes inevitably late) and worked a 16-hour day. After I had known him for some years I asked him if he ever took a holiday. "Of course," he said. "I had one last year." On further enquiry it turned out to have been on Sunday 26 July.

Richard Doll

Francis Avery Jones, physician and gastroenterologist, born Britain Ferrier, Cambridgeshire 31 May 1910; physician, Central Middlesex Hospital 1940-78; consultant, St Mark's Hospital 1948-78; consultant, Royal Navy 1950-78; Editor, Gut 1965-70; CBE 1966; Kt 1970; President, Medical Society of Medical Artists Association 1980-91; President, British Digestive Foundation 1981-92; married 1934 Dorothy Pfeiffer (died 1983; one son); 1983 Joan Edmunds; died Chichester, West Sussex 30 April 1998.

Not satisfied with giving his patients the best possible medical care within his power, he sought to ensure that the structure of the National Health Service played its part equally effectively. He was a member, and later the Chairman, of the King's Fund Committee on Catering and Diet in hospitals. He chaired the King Edward

Francis Avery Jones: 16-hour day

José Peña Gómez

JOSE Peña Gómez was the charismatic leader of the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD). A brilliant orator, he was cheated of the presidency of the Dominican Republic in 1994 by the long-serving ruler Joaquín Balaguer, who used the fact that Peña Gómez was black and probably born of a Haitian mother to appeal to his countrymen's racism.

Peña Gómez's origins have always been a mystery. He was born in the remote countryside of the north-western Dominican Republic, close to the border with Haiti, in 1937. This was the period when the then dictator, Rafael Trujillo, had ordered a sweep against Haitian immigrants, which ended with several thousand of them being killed.

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

DEATHS

EARDLEY-WILMOT: On 11 May 1998, peacefully at home after a long illness, Hazel Mary, aged 88 years, of Wimborne, Dorset. She was born at the North Devon Crematorium, Barnstaple, on Tuesday 19 May at 11.30am. No flowers please. All enquiries to J. Westcott & Sons, Funeral Directors. Telephone 01769 572476.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Queen unveils the Coronation Service for the Order of the Garter at the Royal Chapel of St George, Windsor Castle, on Wednesday, giving a service for the 350th Anniversary of the Order and the Coronation of King Charles I, and attends a reception at the Royal Library, London SW1, to mark the 50th Anniversary of the World Series of the Order of the Garter. The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh also attend the Duke of Edinburgh's service at the Royal Chapel of St George, Windsor Castle, on Wednesday, giving a service for the 350th Anniversary of the Order and the Coronation of King Charles I, and attends a reception at the Royal Library, London SW1, to mark the 50th Anniversary of the World Series of the Order of the Garter. The Queen unveils the Coronation Service for the 350th Anniversary of the Order and the Coronation of King Charles I, and attends a reception at the Royal Library, London SW1, to mark the 50th Anniversary of the World Series of the Order of the Garter. 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21/BUSINESS

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Roddick quits helm at Body Shop

By Nigel Cope
Associate City Editor

ANITA Roddick, the outspoken founder of the Body Shop retail empire, is to relinquish day-to-day control of the company for the first time in the environmentally friendly group's 22-year history. The move follows City disappointment over a sustained period of underperformance caused by the company's poor trading, particularly in the United States.

Ms Roddick, 55, who founded the company with a single store in Littlehampton in 1976, will become co-chairman with her husband Gordon. Patrick Gourlay, currently a director of Danone, the French food group, will become chief executive in July.

Separately, Body Shop is hoping to kick start its loss-making American business by transferring it to a joint venture operation controlled by Adrian Bellamy, one of its non-executive directors. The Roddicks said they were making the changes because they recognised that while they had certain skills they did not have the all-round management expertise to tackle the problems in a business with 1,600 shops spread across dozens of countries.

Commenting on the prospect of handing over the reins at the company she founded, Ms Roddick reacted in typically passionate fashion: "I am not taking a back seat. I have no intention of marginalising myself from this business as a co-working director I just can't see myself retiring, I will still do what I do best – that's marketing, styling, image, store design and so on."

Asked what her new role as co-chairman would actually mean, she

said: "I have no bloody idea." Gordon Roddick added that his wife's title as chief executive "was always a bit of a misnomer" but that she would continue to have a significant input into the "creative" aspects of the business.

"I loathe financial planning," his wife continued. "Everyone is always talking about budgets. Have you got the budget for this or for that? Perhaps now I'll have a budget of my own."

The changes were greeted with a mixed reception in the City. One analyst said: "It doesn't matter what title Anita has, she will still be bouncing around the business like a pin-ball."

Robert Clark at Corporate Intelligence on Retailing, a retail consultant, added: "There's little doubt that Body Shop required changes at a senior level. The problems were in orchestrating all the far-flung parts of the business. They needed an organiser, someone with experience on an international level."

Mr Gourlay, who was not available yesterday, was described as a

"I'd rather go to the grave knowing that I did what I could rather than looking back and wondering" – Anita Roddick

manager skilled at implementing change programmes at big businesses. He has spent 26 years with Danone, most recently as vice president of its North and South American division.

The Roddicks confirmed they have no intention to revive plans to take the business private, having abandoned the idea in 1995 due to worries over high debt levels. They

Anita Roddick's Rocky Ride

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THE INVESTMENT COLUMN
EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

Vaux profits fall flat

SUNDERLAND may be trying to promote back to the Premier League but Vaux, the brewing to hotels group that sponsors them, has produced a decidedly second division performance in recent years. As the table and graph opposite shows, the group's lacklustre profits growth has seen its shares underperform the market by almost 50 per cent since 1993.

Vaux, like all the regional brewers, has struggled to cope with the decline in beer sales and the growth in market share that the large brewers have managed to secure by pouring huge amounts of money behind their leading brands.

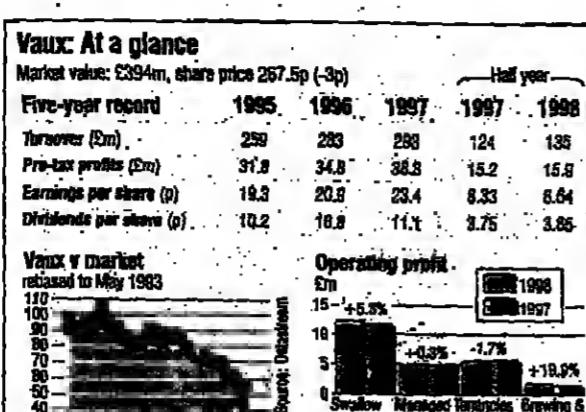
The big rivals have also been able to turn the screw on Vaux's managed-pub profits by investing billions of pounds in their own chains at the expense of the traditional local. Vaux's own efforts to develop pub brands have been meagre by comparison. The stark contrast between the 15 per cent rise in pub profits which Whitbread announced earlier this month and the flat profits Vaux achieved tells its own story.

Vaux has been able to seek solace at its hotels division. Its Swallow Hotels business, already a well-run operation, has grown rapidly thanks to the upturn in the hotels cycle. But Vaux cannot rely on hotels for ever. That particular market is already showing some signs of flattening out.

Vaux's underlying pre-tax profits for the six months to March rose 8 per cent to £16.6m, but the overriding impression from the group's results presentation yesterday was that it will have to run increasingly hard to stand still.

The imminent appointment of a new chief executive could help reform this family-run group and revitalise the possibility of a break-up. But, with one half of the business obviously struggling, even that is not the attractive prospect it once was.

Vaux's shares slipped another 3p to 267.5p yesterday. ABN Amro Hoare Govett forecasts current-year profits of £40.1m, putting the shares on a prospective price-earnings ratio of 12. Despite trading on a large discount to the market, Vaux still looks high enough.



Pricey paper at Taylor

FOR EVIDENCE of overheating in the new issues market, look no further than the flotation of Taylor & Francis. Institutions have been scrambling for stakes in the scientific and technical publisher, which celebrates its 200th anniversary this year.

Yesterday, the group announced that its – admittedly modest – share issue was approximately 10-times oversubscribed. This means that a business which was originally supposed to be valued at about £100m will actually be worth almost 30 per cent more when its shares start trading at 200p on Monday.

This is good news for the existing shareholders – mostly family trusts and a few venture capital groups – who have admirably resisted the temptation to cash in. In fact, just 18 per cent of the shares will be publicly traded when dealings begin. But it also begs the question whether the publishing group deserves to be valued at a close to 20 per cent premium to the rest of the market.

True, the likes of Reed Elsevier have proved just how lucrative scientific publishing can be. When it comes to squeezing the most out of its subscribers, however, Taylor still has plenty to do. Margin on its journals are currently just half the 40 per cent Reed consistently manages to make out of scientific publications.

Taylor also has its work cut out on the books side. The section, which contributed about a third of revenues but almost no profit last year, is being reorganized. Analysts think Taylor should eventually be able to make margins of about 5 per cent, offering plenty of prospects for growth. The chief executive, Tony Selvey, is also bullish about acquisitions, though the risk remains that,

faced with competition from larger groups, he will be tempted to overpay.

But, at the moment, much of this potential has to be taken on trust. Taylor & Francis is in an absolutely parious state as far as rates are concerned. That is where the prob-

lem is. As at the moment the rates are so bad that if they don't turn around by the end of the year then the London market will have problems – and we know the problems it has had.

Sedgwick disappointed the City with a worse-than-expected fall in pre-tax profits to £35.3m before exceptional, compared with £43.5m in the same period last year.

The group's biggest broker said conditions in the London market for general insurance were hitting a nadir as underwriters struggled to keep their clients on board.

Stuart Tarrant, finance director, said: "The London market is in an absolutely parious state as far as rates are concerned. That is where the prob-

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Stuart Tarrant, finance director, said: "The London market is in an absolutely parious state as far as rates are concerned. That is where the prob-

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Battle for Courtauld
as PPG confirms

Acquisitions fail

Boeing production

Boeing pays £40m for Com

Ash buys Brainerd

and creates 300 jobs

Biotech forced to
delay meeting



OUTLOOK ON THE CITY'S UNDERWRITING CARTEL: HOW THE GOVERNMENT IS IN A MUDDLE OVER ENERGY; AND BODY SHOP'S PROBLEMS

These City ways are an economic liability

THE PROVISIONAL set of proposals published this week by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for tackling the City underwriting cartel has received an astonishingly mixed press (some of it downright hostile) for what, on the face of it, seems a considered and entirely reasonable response to a very clear and old-established abuse — that of fixed commissions for a usually exclusive group of City cronies.

Denise Kingsmill, the lawyer chairing the inquiry, must be wondering what she did to deserve the scorn being poured on her, especially since in a rare display of gaiety, the MMC is breaking with precedent to publish its provisional findings so they can be properly debated publicly before a decision is made on whether to act.

Admittedly, the underwriting cartel is a problem largely in abeyance right now. In part this is because City practitioners have responded to the threat of action by reforming their ways, but it is mainly to do with the fact that there simply aren't many rights issues of size being launched these days. It may well be that even if they were to return in a big way — which doesn't look likely given the present trend among companies to redeem their capital — that things have moved on and the old system would have broken down anyway. All the same, we can't rely on that happening.

No anti-competitive practice of this type deserves any kind of place in a modern free market economy. There are obviously much deeper and more important causes for Britain's post-War industrial decline than the City underwriting cartel, but it may have been a minor bit player in the sorry roll call of vested

interest which has so severely stunted our economic progress. Certainly the system has not generally been in the wider interests of the British economy, and by encouraging wasteful and inefficient allocation of capital, it is not entirely clear it has acted in the interests of big institutional investors either.

That these vaguely corrupt, cronyist, City ways should continue to find their supporters, not just among those who benefit from them, but in usually right-thinking politicians and commentators too is indicative of just how much of a task there remains to be done in preparing the British economy for the twenty-first century. Outside the Chancellor's office, which seems to recognise the importance of these things, there is little evidence of the new Government pursuing reform with the vigour and urgency required. The Competition Bill is obviously an important advance on what went before, but the government has pulled in punches on a range of issues (predatory pricing being just one) thereby wasting the opportunity for root and branch reform of competition policy.

The contrast with the United States Justice Department, which is turning on two of the country's most successful companies — Microsoft and Intel — in pursuit of its trust-busting traditions, could hardly be greater. Would the competition authorities here in Britain have acted with the decisiveness of yesterday's action by the US Justice Department to block Rupert Murdoch's sale of satellite capacity to cable TV operators? Now why does that seem so unlikely?

Repeatedly the US has waged war on its dominant suppliers and cartels, it has broken up its monopolies and banished its price fixers. Meanwhile, the US economy has not only survived these onslaughts, but it has prospered and flourished. Might there not be the tiniest, weeny bit of a connection between these two things?

Coal puts Labour in a hole

THE GOVERNMENT's apparent determination to save the British coal industry is turning into an interesting test of its commitment to free and open markets. The choice lies between fixing the electricity generating market to ensure a guaranteed tonnage of coal sales or sticking with the idea that competition between energy sources is the best means of achieving lower prices.

Somewhere between these two positions, there is also a debate going on about energy policy. Should Britain allow itself to become as dependent on natural gas for its electricity generating needs as it once was on coal? The arguments for guaranteeing coal a fixed share on grounds of security of supply and diversity of supply are weak. Gas is plentiful, it is not vulnerable to interruption through industrial action and gas-fired plant is capable of being modified to burn coal.

Despite this, ministers seem inclined to do something for coal. And it is leading them into dangerous territory. The idea of a moratorium on any further gas-fired power stations, say for five years, now appears to be common ground between the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry. What

now appears to have been added to the agenda is the idea of withdrawing consents which have already been granted for gas-fired plant.

In the short-term, this will do little for the coal industry. There is already enough gas-fired capacity actually under construction to displace the output of five or six large pits. But what it would do is halt the march of gas and guarantee at least a residual market for coal. Ministers should think very carefully before intervening in this way. Apart from making their environmental targets harder to achieve, it would send out all the wrong messages about the government's attitude to inward investment and open markets. Miners jobs would be saved for a while but at a much greater cost to Britain's longer-term interests.

Anita can't cut the umbilical cord

ANITA Roddick isn't often wheeled out at City presentations these days. Most of the time she prefers to be half way up the Amazon or some such place, searching for the next jojoba oil. But we got her in full flow yesterday with all the New Age mumbo jumbo that has made her such a handful for the 'pin-striped dinosaurs' of the City she loves so little.

Instead of the boring management utterances by most chief executives we had Anita on hemp ("so useful") umbilical chords (the business is bet baba) and "shopping mall terrorism" (don't ask). No wonder she and the City never got on. Neither party can have a single clue what the other is talking about.

In her new role as co-chairman we may

be seeing even less of Ms Roddick in the Square Mile from now on. This is a shame in some ways but investors in this underperforming company might wonder whether yesterday's management restructure will really change anything.

For a start, Body Shop now looks awfully crowded at the top. We have two executive co-chairman (Gordon and Anita), an executive deputy chairman and a new chief executive. The Roddicks say they will not interfere but is that really likely in an entrepreneurial business where the two founders are both on the board and have a 26 per cent stake?

All this is not to say that changes were not necessary if Body Shop is to remain a public company. It has become increasingly clear that the existing management does not have the range of skills to manage an empire that takes in manufacturing and retailing and sprawls across continents. Manufacturing will now be reviewed and the US business is being placed under a joint venture. More changes will follow. Body Shop could eventually end up as more of a brand manager, like Virgin, than an operator of stores, factories and so on.

Unfortunately, none of this resolves the core issue of ownership. The Roddicks say they abandoned plans to take Body Shop private three years ago because they did not want to swap one set of landlords (bankers and investors) for another (bankers looking after their mezzanine finance). What they have now is an uneasy compromise. They remain a quoted PLC, but everyone knows they don't feel comfortable with it. Not a happy state of affairs.

BOC pledges radical review as profits dive

By Andrew Yates

BOC, the troubled international gases company, yesterday announced a far ranging review into its entire business designed to stem a rapid decline in its profits. The review is likely to lead to a radical shake-up of the group in an effort to slash costs.

The announcement came as BOC revealed a 17 per cent fall in pre-tax profits to £179.8m for the six months to March due to the economic turmoil in Asia and the strong pound.

BOC is looking at implementing a more centralised operational structure to keep a tight rein on costs. The group may also embark on a large

scale disposal programme or slim down some of its worst performing units, which would inevitably involve job cuts.

Prime candidates for reform include BOC's chilled food division and its French distribution operation. Danny Rosenkranz, BOC's chief executive, said yesterday the two business had plunged into the red over the last few months. The chilled food division encountered problems after taking on a loss-making contract and the French business has been hit by difficult local economic conditions.

As the biggest specialty gases producer in Asia, BOC has been badly affected by the economic crisis in the region. The group predicted yesterday

that the turmoil in the Far East is far from over, with the Japanese economy at severe risk of falling into recession.

BOC has been vulnerable to the sharp rise in the value of the pound, which wiped another £13m off its pre-tax profits in the six-month period. The crash in the world-wide semiconductor market has also battered profits at its vacuum technology business, which is heavily dependent on the sector.

BOC has already embarked on a large programme to improve the efficiency of the business but its latest initiative will dramatically accelerate this process. The group is also looking for acquisitions after recently selling Ohmeda, its

healthcare business, for £630m.

Mr Rosenkranz said yesterday: "The sale of Ohmeda was a key moment in the history of BOC. Now we have got to sort out how we are going to run the rest of the business. We have got to get more improvements."

BOC has underperformed the FTSE 100 by around a fifth over the last 12 months after problems in Asia left it with a gloomy earnings outlook. Analysts cut current-year profit forecasts by another £35m to £420m. However, its shares rose 3.5p to 796p as the City welcomed the group's move to clear its decks. The group plans to unveil the results of its review by August.



Dr Keith McCullagh: Preparing circular to answer critics

spected executive that joined the group from Astra.

Several major drugs companies are also believed to have run a slide rule over British Biotech, attracted by the fact that it has a cash pile equivalent to 30p a share compared to a current share price of just 70.5p. But bidders have been deterred by growing doubts about the efficacy of its treatments, particularly Zactex, its pancreatitis drug. The speed with which the group is using up its spare resources with an expensive development programme has also caused concern.

British Biotech said that its

research and development meeting to discuss its pipeline of drugs was now scheduled for June 15.

Analysts raised concerns

that the delay was an indication that the group's drug pro-

gramme has been heavily over-

shadowed by Dr Miller's charges.

British Biotech has faced a

stream of allegations from Dr

Miller since he was fired from

the group last month. It plans

to produce a circular answer-

ing these claims as soon as possible.

But thus far the group has been

receptive to release a publica-

tion date. City observers re-

main sceptical that the circular

will be enough to save the job

of Keith McCullagh, the

group's chief executive.

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BMW rules out higher Rolls offer

By Michael Harrison

BMW yesterday ruled out making an increased offer for Rolls-Royce Motor Cars as the car-and-mouse game with Volkswagen for control of the luxury car maker continued.

Speaking at the group's annual shareholders' meeting in Munich, Bernd Pischetsrieder, the chairman of BMW said: "Under no circumstances will we change our offer for Rolls-Royce."

But he said that BMW, whose £340m offer was topped off by £130m from VW last week, continued to believe that it would clinch the deal. In a speech to shareholders, Mr Pischetsrieder said: "We said at

the end of last year that we would make only one offer and we have made only one. Therefore we are surprised by the public debate about whether we would make another."

Shareholders in Vickers, the parent company of Rolls, meet on 4 June to decide between the two bids. The company yesterday issued a circular to shareholders urging them to reject BMW's offer and accept the higher bid from VW.

Mr Pischetsrieder reiterated that BMW would end its contract to supply engines for the Rolls-Royce Silver Seraph and the Bentley Arnage if the business was sold to VW. The terms of the contract require it

to give 12 months notice.

However, the outcome of the bid battle between the two German carmakers may rest with the aero-engine maker Rolls-Royce plc which owns the rights to the Rolls-Royce name and trademark.

It has made plain its backing for the bid from BMW, with which it already has an aero-engines joint venture. VW would probably have to pay a substantial licence fee and give Rolls-Royce plc extensive guarantees about how the name would be protected before the aero-engine maker would agree to the transfer of the marque to a foreign buyer.

Vickers was initially engaged in a furious war of words

with Rolls-Royce PLC over what it saw as the aero-engine company's attempts to interfere in the sale process and undermine its ability to maximise returns for Vickers shareholders.

But last night the Vickers camp was endeavouring to take the heat out of the row.

"There is no point resurrecting the farce we have last week. Let's just wait for the shareholders to vote on 4 June and then everyone will know where they are," said a spokesman.

One of Vickers institutional shareholders said yesterday that Rolls-Royce plc was having "perfectly properly in seeking to defend the interests of its own shareholders".

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MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

CU encounters stormy trading ahead of merger

By Derek Pain

SHARES of Commercial Union and General Accident wobbled uneasily ahead of today's three-month figures, which are likely to be extremely disappointing.

CU fell 46p to 1,076p; GenAcc 45p to 1,360p.

The insurers, due to merge to create CGU, have been hit by storms in Canada and the US and fierce competition.

Charterhouse Tilney expect CU to produce profits of £55m, down from £102, and GenAcc £75m, compared with £114m.

Analyst Eamonn Flanagan is keen on the shares and declares: "The merger offers significant potential in terms of cost cutting, management, strategic positioning and quality of earnings".

It is, however, Royal & SunAlliance which is intriguing the stock market. Its cash hogging attitude has prompted speculation it has a big deal in the pipeline. Figures, due next week, are likely to emerge at

£140m against £195m. The shares eased 16.5p to 668.5p.

The market had a lassitude session, with Footsie ending 71.6 points off at 5,956.7. Supporting shares were unruled with the mid and SmallCap indices stretching to yet new highs. 31, the investment group with a strong small companies involvement, reflected the popularity of supporting shares with a 12p gain to 600p. Its latest market offering is Taylor & Francis, where it has around 15 per cent. The specialist publisher is coming to market with a £130m valuation.

Kingfisher was the best performing blue chip, jumping 48p to 1,095p on hopes its Superdrug chain will benefit from a drug price war. But Alliance Unilever fell 7.5p to 429.5p.

Courtairds, as PPG Industries of Pittsburgh emerged as a possible counter bidder to the Dutch Akzo Nobel group, gained 9p to 473p. Northern

Foods, which recently demerged its Express Dairies side, improved 12p to 213.5p as SBC Warburg moved its stance to buy and suggested a 250p target.

Fairey, the electronic equipment group, suffered a 66p fall to 498.5p after a profit warning from chairman Sir Robin Biggam. He said returns from the instrumentation businesses, the group's largest operation, would be "well below" last year's corresponding figures.

Cable & Wireless Communications lost an early gain, ending 9.5p down at 442p as Canada's BCE said it intended to sell its 14.25 per cent interest. Cable & Wireless, up 2p to 679p on persistent speculation about corporate action, may take up some of the unwanted shares.

Engineer Charter continued to attract bullish comments. The price rose 16.5p to 756.5p as Headroom Crosthwaite joined Panmure Gordon in ad-

vocating the shares are cheap. Wassall, the conglomerate now parading as more of a venture capitalist, hardened to 330p on talk of US investment roadshows. Rolls-Royce, with US presentations almost on the runway, fell 6.75p to 297.75p as Mercury Asset Management sold 4.9 million shares, cutting its stake to 15.5 per cent.

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Somerfield held at 342.5p. BT Alex Brown believes benefits from the takeover of Kwik Save could be around £100m. "Strong profit growth and improved visibility of earnings warrant a re-rating," said the investment house, formerly known as NatWest Securities.

Gibson, the printing ink group, jumped 39.5p to 242.5p as Sun Chemicals produced a 250p-a-share agreed offer.

Capitol, a security group, gained 27p to 167.5p after a management buyout materialised at 175p a share. Chemical group Brunner Mond, an original constituent of Imperial Chemical Industries which came to market at a cut-price 175p two years ago, gained 7.5p to 186.5p as a 190p share offer was accepted from a company called Soda Ash International.

The failure of talks at Lambert Smith Howson, the estate agent, had little impact. After falling 22p, the shares rallied

0.00p of a hostile strike, ending 2p off at 167.5p.

Property Partnership fell 25p to 292.5p as its bid talks were terminated.

Air London, an air charter broker, climbed 17.5p to a 377.5p high with takeover talk intensifying. Celsius International, the struggling drugs group, rose 8.5p to 41p; chief executive Arthur Holden has quit and is talking about mounting a bid (rumoured to be around 60p a share).

Seb Upholstery hardened 4.5p to 143.5p after Merrill Lynch said buy. Uso, accorded the same recommendation, was 1p higher at 240p.

Arriva, the transport group, continued to rally after being hit by a downturn trading statement and a persistent, now thought to be cleared, institutional seller. The shares rose 13p to 447.5p. They have been as low as 420p. Before they were unsettled by worries over the group's financial side the shares were riding at above 500p.

TAKING STOCK

ARLEN, the electrical group, firmed to 36p, highest since January, on talk of corporate activity. It may be near to selling unwanted bits and pieces of Plasmech, taken over in an £11m deal. The sales could leave Arlen with a £10m cash pile. With a market capitalisation of £22m and an underperforming share price, the electrical group looks vulnerable.

ASK Central, the 35-strong restaurants chain run by the Kaye family, gained 17.5p to 412.5p. It has a 26.4m cash call on its menu with shares offered at 350p. Profits more than doubled to £2m. Two years ago the shares were 56.5p.

SHARES of Allied Leisure, the bowling alley and fast food group, should be 45p against the 30p current price. The investment house considers the possibility of a takeover bid. It forecasts profits of £4.4m this year, up from 54.2m.

Share Price Data

Prices are in pence except where stated. The yield is the latest twelve months' declared gross dividend. The percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding extraordinary items including exceptional items.

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Foreign Exchange Rates											
Country	Sterling	Spot	1 month	3 month	Dollar	Spot	1 month	3 month	D-Mark		
UK	10000	2.5840	2.5806	2.5767	150.06	0.6126	0.6142	0.6148	0.6151	0.6151	0.6151
Australia	2.5840	2.5806	2.5737	2.5714	124.94	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477
Austria	50.9353	50.5453	50.2256	50.1453	1.2477	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025
Belgium	2.5823	2.5727	2.5728	2.5726	143.16	0.6138	0.6140	0.6140	0.6140	0.6140	0.6140
Denmark	2.5823	2.5727	2.5727	2.5726	1.2477	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025
Finland	8.8143	8.7862	8.7357	8.7357	1.2477	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025
France	8.7862	8.7357	8.7357	8.7357	1.2477	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025
Germany	12.6683	12.5754	12.5754	12.5754	1.2477	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025
Greece	50.5453	50.5453	50.5453	50.5453	1.2477	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025
Hong Kong	1.3514	1.3515	1.3483	1.3483	1.2477	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025
Ireland	1.3514	1.3515	1.3483	1.3483	1.2477	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025
Italy	1.3514	1.3515	1.3483	1.3483	1.2477	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025
Japan	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477
Malta	5.0361	5.0494	5.0505	5.0505	1.2477	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025
Mexico	13.0065	13.0065	13.0065	13.0065	1.2477	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025
Netherlands	13.0065	13.0065	13.0065	13.0065	1.2477	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025
New Zealand	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477	1.2477
Norway	12.1510	12.0554	12.0554	12.0554	1.2477	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025
Portugal	2.5735	2.5641	2.5426	2.5426	1.2477	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025
Saudi Arabia	6.3232	6.3232	6.3232	6.3232	1.2477	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025
South Africa	2.5735	2.5642	2.5642	2.5642	1.2477	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025
Spain	24.6356	24.5775	24.4502	24.4502	1.2477	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025
Sweden	12.4415	12.4707	12.3563	12.3563	1.2477	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025
Switzerland	12.4330	12.4707	12.3563	12.3563	1.2477	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025
US	12.4330	12.4707	12.3563	12.3563	1.2477	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025	0.8025
Other Spot Rates											
Country	Starling	Dollar	Country	Starling	Dollar	Country	Starling	Dollar	Country	Starling	Dollar
Argentina	10.8529	10.0000	Oman	0.6294	0.3850	Armenia	1.2477	1.2477	Armenia	1.2477	1.2477
Bolivia	1.1732	1.1457	Pakistan	7.0222	3.9000	Barbados	1.2477	1.2477	Barbados	1.2477	1.2477
China	1.3536	0.8765	Philippines	0.3628	0.3600	Bhutan	1.2477	1.2477	Bhutan	1.2477	1.2477
Czech Rep	5.2843	5.2823	Poland	5.0275	5.0275	Portugal	2.5735	2.5642	Portugal	2.5735	2.5642
Egypt	5.2843	5.2823	Qatar	2.5735	2.5642	Qatar	2.5735	2.5642	Qatar	2.5735	2.5642
Finland	1.2477	1.2477	Russia	1.2477	1.2477	Russia	1.2477	1.2477	Russia	1.2477	1.2477
Hungary	1.2477	1.2477	Singapore	1.2477	1.2477	Singapore	1.2477	1.2477	Singapore	1.2477	1.2477
India	6.6540	6.8780	Sri Lanka	1.2477	1.2477	Sri Lanka	1.2477	1.2477	Sri Lanka	1.2477	1.2477
Indonesia	15.0420	12.9200	Thailand	1.2477	1.2477	Thailand	1.2477	1.2477	Thailand	1.2477	1.2477
Iran	0.4969	0.3638	Tunisia	1.2477	1.2477	Tunisia	1.2477	1.2477	Tunisia	1.2477	1.2477
Kuwait	1.2477	1.2477	UAE	1.2477	1.2477	UAE	1.2477	1.2477	UAE	1.2477	1.2477
Niger	1.2477	1.2477	Yemen	1.2477	1.2477	Yemen	1.2477	1.2477	Yemen	1.2477	1.2477
Interest Rates											
Country	Starling	Dollar	Country	Starling	Dollar	Country	Starling	Dollar	Country	Starling	Dollar
UK	7.25%	2.50%	US	8.50%	5.00%	Japan	8.50%	5.00%	Belgium	0.50%	0.50%
France	7.25%	4.50%	Lombard	4.50%	4.50%	Canada	5.00%	5.00%	Belgium	2.75%	2.75%
Intervention	3.30%	3.30%	Canada	5.00%	5.00%	China	5.00%	5.00%	China	3.00%	3.00%
Italy	5.00%	5.00%	Denmark	5.00%	5.00%	Denmark	5.00%	5.00%	Denmark	4.25%	4.25%
Discount	5.00%	5.00%	Switzerland	4.25%	4.25%	Switzerland	4.25%	4.25%	Switzerland	4.00%	4.00%
Netherlands	3.30%	3.30%	Discount	4.00%	4.00%	Repo(Avg)	4.35%	4.35%	Lombard	3.50%	3.50%
Bond Yields											
Country	3 mth	chg	1 yr	chg	2 yr	chg	5 yr	chg	10 yr	chg	10 yr
Australia	4.53	0.02	4.79	-0.02	4.97	-0.01	5.59	0.00	5.71	-0.01	5.71
Belgium	3.71	0.00	3.98	0.00	4.31	0.01	4.68	0.02	5.01	0.03	5.01
Canada	4.71	-0.01	5.01	0.00	5.21	0.00	5.51	0.00	5.71	0.00	5.71
Denmark	3.59	0.00	3.74	0.00	4.08	0.00	4.45	0.00	4.64	0.00	4.64
France	0.00	0.00	3.74	0.00	4.08	0.00	4.45	0.00	4.64	0.00	4.64
Germany	3.64	-0.01	3.96	0.00	4.27	0.00	4.67	0.00	4.87	0.00	4.87
Ireland	3.50	0.00	3.74	0.00	4.08	0.00	4.45	0.00	4.64	0.00	4.64
Italy	3.50	0.00	3.74	0.00	4.08	0.00	4.45	0.00	4.64	0.00	4.64
Japan											

Schalken profits from late call

Tennis

By John Roberts
in Rome

HAVING begun the day frustratingly, making telephone calls to a perpetually engaged airline reservations number, the Dutchman Sjeng Schalken was delighted not to have booked a flight home from the Italian Open last night. The "lucky loser" from the qualifying event, pressed into action only an hour before play was due to start, eliminated Pat Rafter, the United States Open champion, in the first round, 6-3, 6-7, 6-4.

For the second time within a week, Schalken had profited from Marc Rosset's injury problems. The Swiss former Olympic champion had been forced to retire against Schalken during the second set of their first-round match in Hamburg, and a recurrence of the injury to his lower back caused him to withdraw from the Rafter match. "I think I'm going to take Mr Rosset out for dinner," Schalken said.

Knowing that a few players were less than 100 per cent fit on arriving at the Foro Italico, the Dutchman practised for four hours on Monday and hit with his compatriot Jan Siemerink yesterday morning. Apart from improving Schalken's footwork, the exercise enabled him to get

used to the light balls that had bamboozled him during the qualifying tournament. "They were so fast I couldn't keep them in the court," Schalken said. "It was like playing at altitude."

Resolving to attack Rafter's serve — "I tried to get on top of it, because if you go too far behind the baseline his kick is unbelievable" — Schalken won the only service break and was ready when the second one arrived in the third set. "The match was 50-50, but I could hold my serve all the time," he said.

It was fourth-seeded

Rafter's first match since taking a month's break after losing to the American Brian MacPhie in the second round of the Japan Open, and the Australian's first contest on clay since losing to Sergi Bruguera in last year's French Open semi-finals.

Rafter, who tends to take time off from the tour before the Italian championships and after Wimbledon, considered that he had prepared well for his return to the courts. While this might have been true in terms of practice, he did overlook a couple of items that help during an hour and 46 minutes on court on hot, humid days — light coloured shirts, and a cap.

Starting the match wearing a deep red shirt, Rafter eventually changed into a white one with stripes. Spectators

were made to feel even more uncomfortable when the Australian finished the match wearing black.

"I had to wear black, because I didn't have any white shirts with me that had [advertising] patches on them," Rafter said. "I should have rung my mum up and asked her to bring some more. It was surprisingly hot. I was pretty knackered at the end." And the cap? "I'm very particular about the cap. Being a serve and volleyer, it's got to fit just right, otherwise it will fall off when I'm playing. I didn't bring it with me. How smart is that on a day like today?"

Pete Sampras, the world No 1, won his first match in Rome since his triumph in 1994. The American defeated Sweden's Thomas Enqvist, 7-6, 6-4, a performance that helped put behind him his defeat in Monte Carlo, 6-1, 6-1, against Fabrice Santoro.

Santoro also defeated Sampras in the first round in 1995, when the American was defending the Italian title he won with such style in 1994. His compatriot Jim Courier beat him in the opening round last year.

"Conditions this time are similar to when I won it," Sampras said. "As the match went on I was feeling the ball better, the forehand was coming around and I was serving well." Moreover, he remembered to play in white like a true Wimbledon champion.



Wigan's Danny Moore (left) and Mark Bell put the Meerkats through their paces at Central Park yesterday

Photograph: Ben Duffy

Southern's party breaks all the barriers

AS THREE black South African cricketers unpack their suitcases and the debate rages over their Rugby Union's multi-racial credentials, or the lack of them, another sporting team from that country has been going about its business in Britain.

The South African Meerkats Mini League side crosses the barriers in more ways than one. Set

up by the expatriate Widnesian, Dave Southern, the make-up of a 21-strong squad that ends its three-week visit today reflects his work in townships, with the boys and girls who represent one of the great untapped reservoirs of talent in world sport.

Southern was going into

places like Soweto and Alexandra long before rugby union

showed any interest, but his

modified game now has a foot in both camps.

Although the kids are playing clearly a variant of rugby league — with the rather jarring addition of the forward pass — this visit has taken them to rugby union clubs as far afield as Barnstaple and Dublin as well as to league hotbeds like Hull, Widnes and, by way of a grand finale yesterday, Wigan.

The youngsters who have run around a playing field with Jason Robinson have done the same with Lawrence Dallaglio.

Following an acrimonious split from the South African Rugby League, Southern gets no support from that source — although he had what he describes as an encouraging meeting yesterday with the League here.

He has been really pleased with the way people have fallen into line with us, he said. "Even real rugby people in Hull, who thought at first that it was a bit of a circus, finished up by being really impressed with it. It's not about pushing the kids in any one direction; it's about giving them a chance."

The children, aged 10 to 13, are drawn from the 40,000 who play the hybrid game in five of South Africa's provinces. For the lucky ones selected for the trip,

it has been an eye-opening experience. "I have enjoyed it very much," said 10-year-old Sambeswe Majole, from Cape Town. "I liked Oxford the best. The kids were very friendly."

The party, with the possible exception of a little girl who ran into a crush barrier, also enjoyed their time at Central Park where they received a warm welcome, and were put through their paces by John Momie and his assistant, Andy Goodway, as well as players like Robinson, Mark Bell and Danny Moore.

"It's great that a company as big as Ericsson has given this support," said Robinson. "It's a once in a lifetime opportunity to travel and make friends. They're obviously very talented and look as though they've enjoyed themselves — which is the main thing."

As they stood together in the stand for a rendition of the new national anthem, "Nkosi Sikele Afrika," that did indeed seem far more important than the precise pedigree of the rules they play under.

Aussies invest to fight drugs

Olympic Games

OLYMPIC organisers in Sydney will receive about £1.2m from the Australian government to improve the laboratory's ability to detect substances banned by the International Olympic Committee.

The IOC is hoping to have adequate procedures in place by the Games to test for substances, which can only be detected by blood testing at present. The grant, over a three-year period, was part of a £13m provisional allocation to Olympic organisers made in yesterday's federal budget. Thomson said the funding would depend on the ability of the national and New South Wales state government. The

strategy for a drug-free Sydney Games, Thomson said.

A cornerstone of that strategy will be the Olympic Games drug research programme to improve the laboratory's ability to detect substances banned by the International Olympic Committee.

The grant, over a three-year period, was part of a £13m provisional allocation to Olympic organisers made in yesterday's federal budget. Thomson said the funding would depend on the ability of the national and New South Wales state government. The

governments have been embroiled in a deepening rift over funding, with Thomson refusing to deal with the state Olympics minister, Michael Knight.

The Government announced it would make the provisional allocation between 1998-1999 and 2000-2001 to enable the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games to purchase services for the Games. So far the national government has committed or spent £155m on the Games. According to the budget, it would spend a further £2.4m on the staging of the actual games.

The government also announced a plan to raise a further £30m over four years to meet the costs of the games.

Folkestone

HYPERTON

5.55 MARTINS BOY 6.25 MILITARY

6.25 AVIATOR 7.25 THE MELAKA

7.25 AIGHT SET TWO 8.25 MILITARY REG

8.25 GENEVA (GOOD TO FIND IN PLACES)

8.25 GENEVA (GOOD TO FIND IN PL

Woodward's rookies promised a 'Pommie thrashing'

Rugby Union

By Chris Hewett

ENGLAND and Australia were at sporting loggerheads while WG Grace's chin was still a brittle-free zone, but seldom can there have been so toxic an outpouring of competitive bile as that which flooded the Twickenham headquarters of the Rugby Football Union yesterday. According to Dick McGruther, one of the Wallabies' most prominent officials and a graduate of the Les Patterson school of diplomacy, England's 37-man squad for this summer's four-Test tour of the southern hemisphere amounts to the "greatest sell-out since Gallipoli".

The chairman of the Australian Rugby Union did not stop there: "I think the RFU have treated the southern hemi-

sphere with a degree of contempt, but we invite all Australians to come out and witness a Pommie thrashing," he spluttered, eager to cement a reputation as the greatest Aussie mator since Merv Hughes. "You really have to wonder whether this mob is capable of hosting a World Cup pool, or why they should be rewarded with one."

McGruther, whose status as an executive member of the International Rugby Board makes him one of the most influential political figures in the union game, hurled his toys clean out of his pram in response to England's decision to send no fewer than 17 uncapped players across the equator later this month. If a critical outburst was entirely predictable from so outspoken a character - McGruther took it upon himself to stoke the flames of discord

throughout the recent domestic peace talks between the RFU and its leading professional clubs - the level of vitriol was startling, to say the least. Should England actually win in Brisbane on 6 June, they will expect their accuser to issue a public apology from the top of Twickenham's West Stand.

Clive Woodward, the England coach, saw the verbal barrage coming. "I understand the southern hemisphere's point of view and I don't feel great about leaving senior players at home, especially as all three of our tour opponents brought strong squads to Britain before Christmas," he admitted. "But I can put my hand on my heart and say that with the possible exception of Kyran Bracken, none of those players would make the Test side on current form. If we were playing this

weekend, guys like Lawrence Dallaglio and Martin Johnson wouldn't be on the field."

Dallaglio, Johnson, Bracken, Jason Leonard, Jeremy Guscott and Tony Underwood are the most controversial absentees; Guscott insisted after last year's Lions triumph that he would never tour again while the other four are carrying injuries requiring

rest, recuperation and, in some cases, surgery. "You only had to see Lawrence playing in last Saturday's cup final to realise that he is a shadow of himself," Woodward said. "These players may be turning out for their clubs - something I'm far from happy about, I might say - but the fact remains that they're unfit and out of form. I don't want to

insult other countries by fielding injured players, however big the names involved."

Phil de Grawville and Paul Grayson are, as expected, excluded for pressing family reasons, while the absence of four more Test regulars - Richard Hill, Tim Rodber, Mike Catt and David Rees - with long-term injuries means that only nine of the 22 English Lions

who toured over South Africa under Fran Cotton and Ian McGeechan will travel south this time. Indeed, it is almost impossible to select a full Lions side of non-touring Englishmen proof positive that if a week is a long time in politics for one reason or another, a year is a long time in politics and in modern-day rugby.

Matthew Dawson,

the

Northampton scrum-half, leads

the party in Dallaglio's absence. Woodward could hard-

ly have made a more ironic business of the seven-match programme, Ben Sturman may have cemented his place in a back row certain to feature Tony Diprose and Neil Back. The 18th blind-side flanker needs to fend off what's certain to be a stern challenge from the recalled Ben Clarke, but Woodward sees him as a newcomer with World Cup potential.

The most experimental areas of selection are at wing, where the uncapped Sale pairing of Tom Beattie and Matt Moore will battle with the uncapped Richmond duo of Spencer Brown and Dominic Chapman, and at prop. Woodward is seriously concerned about the front-row situation and with good reason; as the two rookies, Duncan Bell and Darren Crompton, will quickly discover, a "bloodbath" in New Zealand tends to involve real blood.

Eriksson and Nicol pull out of tour

SCOTLAND'S tour to Fiji and Australia suffered more setbacks yesterday when the London Scottish centre, Ronnie Eriksson, and Bath's captain, Andy Nicol, were forced to withdraw from the 35-man squad.

Nicol became the ninth player to make his apologies after suffering a torn hamstring while playing for his club against Newcastle last night. Hours earlier, Eriksson had become the eighth because of ligament damage to a finger which requires surgery. However, he will continue to play for his club in their two-leg play-off against Bristol as the Exiles try to secure promotion to England's top flight. His tour place goes to Jamie Mayer, Watsons' dynamic young centre.

Eriksson's withdrawal leaves an even greater hole in terms of experience, with Ian Jardine the only recognised centre in the squad with more than one cap to his name. With Alan Tait, Gary Armstrong, Dodi Weir and Tony Slattery making themselves unavailable, and Peter Walton, George Graham and Craig Chalmers injured, the loss of Nicol is another major blow.

The Kelso captain, Adam Roxburgh, and the Heriot's FP's full-back, Hugh Gilmore, have been instructed not to play in their clubs' Tennents Premiership play-off decider on Saturday to avoid jeopardising their places on the eight-match tour, with the squad scheduled to leave on Monday.

• The South African Rugby Football Union accepted the resignation of its president, Louis Luyt, yesterday and resolved to apologise to President Nelson Mandela for dragging him into court in March. Saru plans to meet the black-led National Sports Council today to seek a reversal of the NSC's call for an international boycott of the Springboks.

TODAY'S NUMBER

1,000

The number of square metres of turf which will be rooted in the Manchester United museum when the Old Trafford pitch is dug up this summer. Two-thirds of the pitch is being given away in one metre squares to fans on a first-come first-served basis, while the remaining 1000m will be auctioned off for charity.

O'Sullivan's mix of talent and turmoil

Alleged drug abuse is the latest blot on the reputation of one of snooker's most colourful players. Guy Hodgson on a volatile career

RONNIE O'SULLIVAN was frank. He always is. Delve into a history that most would prefer to remain hidden and he exposes it with an almost evangelical zeal. "I was a prat," he said, referring to the time he hit a press officer. "Totally out of order. I was like a time bomb waiting to go off."

A time bomb, no metaphor sums up O'Sullivan better. He either explodes into effortless brilliance on a snooker table, or is so careless you want to shake responsibility into him. His character, too, is a combustible mix, either delightful or, on occasions, boorish. You can almost hear the ticking.

Today another potential blot is poised to land on an already besmirched reputation. O'Sullivan is alleged to have failed a preliminary drugs test, something that will be established only if the B sample also shows traces of cannabis. A fine and a possible suspension await the 22-year-old if the allegations are proved true.

It is the latest of a lengthening line of incidents that has dogged a career that has lunched from brilliance to controversy. Cannabis is not a performance-enhancing drug, but its use is against the law of the land and is outlawed by the World Professional Billiard and Snooker Association. To use it is to run the risk of detection in random tests. To be, in O'Sullivan's words, a prat.

This is not unfamiliar territory for O'Sullivan. His first brush with authority was laughably childish, being reprimanded for throwing a bread roll which hit an official at a junior event. He was 11 then and even when he turned professional five years later the "crimes" were petty assertions of rebelliousness, inappropriate scruffiness at an official reception in Malta, being reported to the WPBSA for urinating on a wall and using profane language in Plymouth.

Away from the table, however, the signs of inner turmoil were more alarming. He smashed a neon light demonstrating his driving skills in a car park and he was banned for speeding at 133mph on the M3 in February 1995.

I am easily led, but if I do go out for a beer with my friends at least I'm in good condition to recover now'

the press room. For that he was fined £20,000 and given a two-year suspended ban.

If that paints a picture of a brat then personal experience would argue otherwise. Six years ago, I remember his running breathless into Ilford Snooker Centre to make a contribution to an article about the sport even though he had earlier said he could not make the appointment. Most sportsmen can barely be bothered to answer the telephone, never mind put themselves out for journalists.

Even last month he was happy to disrupt his practice at the British Open. "Sure, mate. Want to do it now?" Then he disarmingly revealed that it was his mother who had dragged some sense into him after the Michael Ganley incident. "She threw me out of the house," he said in mock indignation.

"She wasn't happy with my attitude. I became lazy and fat and couldn't be bothered to do anything. She did it because she

was taken over the family's pornography business, was also jailed for seven months for

tax irregularities, and, as a result of a celebrity, received the intimidatory treatment from the inmates of Holloway, something snapped. His behaviour plummeted as "incidents" escalated. Potting balls seemed unimportant and he talked of giving up the game, an astonishing sentiment for someone still in his teens.

It was only when his mother was released and evicted him from the family home that he came away from the

abyss losing three stones and undergoing a strenuous fitness regime. "I am easily led," he said: "but if I do go out for a beer with my friends at least I'm in good condition to recover now."

The evidence was strong. O'Sullivan won four titles last season and rose from seventh to third in the world rankings. A typically fitful appearance in the World Championship semi-finals a fortnight ago where he lost to the eventual winner, John Higgins, also suggested that he was moving down the path towards the full flowering of his talent. Erratically, but moving none the less.

Now that progress is threatened by these latest allegations, if proved true, the least O'Sullivan can expect is a hefty fine and the docking of ranking points although the WPBSA, given his past record, will also have to consider a suspension. Yet again, O'Sullivan is in need of guidance, either

from his manager, Ian Doyle, or from his parents.

"I still keep in touch with my father," O'Sullivan said recently, "he can still find ways to give me a kick up the backside over the phone."

No matter whether the allegations are true, you can guarantee contact will have been made this week between Leicester Prison and the player's home in Essex.

It is to be hoped frank words were exchanged there, too.

Action on fighters' weights

Boxing

BRITISH boxing is to go weight-watching in the latest attempt to further improve its already strict medical standards. Following Spencer Oliver's ill-fated contest against Sergei Devakov, the Board of Control now intends to send officials into gyms on a regular basis to monitor the poundage of all fighters.

Oliver's camp insist that the blood clot sustained by Barnett's defending champion in the European super-bantamweight title fight at the Royal Albert Hall

10 days ago could not be attributed to the demands of weight-making.

But the Board secretary, John Morris, still believes it is time to act and make certain that fighters are not short-cutting their battle with the scales by thus increasing the dangers of dehydration and with it a greater risk of brain injury.

When the Board's medical

systems were overhauled after the death of Bradley Stone, the monitoring of boxers' weights was to be carried out on a random basis. The operation will now become a more concentrated one.

The weekend after next, a noted patron of the sport, the Greek shipping magnate Sir Eddie Kulukundis, has decided to put on a little bash for them all. He has hired the Fournier stadium at Arles in the south of France for a two-day meet which will offer a warm-weather venue for competitors who would otherwise be thinking in terms of fixtures at Stoke, Hexham or Chester-le-Street.

Kulukundis, a former theatrical impresario married to the actress Susan Hampshire, accepts that this project is "more quixotic, more exotic" than any he has ever attempted. And the cost? "Well, over 20," he said. "Yes, we were talking thousands."

New plea to lift TV controls

Cricket

By Myles Hodgson

LORD'S officials yesterday reinforced their warning that cricket's future as England's premier summer sport is under threat if the Government refuses to take home Test matches off the list of protected broadcast events.

All England's home Tests are on a list including the Wimbledon tennis finals, the FA Cup final, the Derby, the Grand National and the Olympics, for which five coverage outside must be available on terrestrial television.

The ECB, which showed an annual revenue of £55m in the report, says that implementing its national development plan to improve facilities, coaching and opportunities within the sport would cost about £300m over the past four years. It argues that about 40 per

cent of cricket's income is from television revenue and unless it has an opportunity to increase that income, cricket could suffer in competition with other summer sports like rugby league, tennis and athletics. The topic is being assessed by an advisory committee, who have recommended that cricket is removed from the list, before the Heritage Secretary, Chris Smith, gives his final decision.

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